

# WRITINGS OF C CRAIN

by C. Crain

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*A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by C. Crain, compiled for study and devotional reading.*

30 Chapters

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## 01.00 Readings on the Epistle to the Romans

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### Readings on the Epistle to the Romans

C. Crain. The epistle to the Romans is, in character, a treatise on the gospel. It is a divinely authorized unfolding of the nature and character of the gospel.

## 01.00i Index

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## 01.01 Romans 1

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### Romans 1:1-32

Romans 1:1-17 is a fitting introduction. In it we are assured that the epistle is written by divine authority. Paul, the human author of it, writes as one who has been specially called by God to the apostolic office. He was divinely set apart to the proclamation of the gospel to men — all men. As so called and set apart, it was his divinely-imposed responsibility not only to publicly proclaim the gospel to all nations, but also to unfold to the saints — all believers — the fulness of the blessing it bestows on those who receive it.

Insisting on the divine authority by which he writes, the apostle also declares that the message which God has put in his trust relates to God's Son. The Son of God is its great theme. This leads him to make a statement which is a remarkable unfolding of the unique Person who is the subject of the message committed to him. In this statement reference is first made to His earthly origin. He comes of the family of David. By a true human birth He is a son of David. He is thus in reality a true man. But the apostle goes on to say that He is a man to be distinguished from all other men. The power of the Spirit of holiness was displayed in Him throughout the life He lived in human flesh. In His human life He came in contact with dead people; but whenever and wherever this contact occurred there was manifested a power equal to the destruction of death and corruption. Displayed thus as being in His own person the annulment of death and corruption, He was shown to be the Son of God, proved to be God as well as man.

What a unique Person! What a glorious Person! How transcendently glorious even in the lowest depths of humiliation!

It was by such a Person Paul was called to the apostolic office. He filled the office by the highest possible authority. God's object in putting him in trust with the gospel, in setting him apart to the public proclamation of it among all nations, was to secure faith-obedience. Among those who had thus obeyed the gospel were the believers at Rome. They were very dear to God.

Paul evidently had never been at Rome, had never seen the believers there. They were bright lights, since they were being spoken of everywhere; and this fact filled the apostle's heart with gratitude to God. He solemnly assured them that he was continually praying for them, specially pleading to be granted the privilege of making them a visit. It was his desire to bestow upon them some spiritual blessing; and to have the comfort of enjoying in their midst the mutual exercise of their faith.

It was not from lack of interest in them that he had never visited them. He had often formed the purpose to go to Rome, but had been hindered thus far in carrying it out. He acknowledged, however, that he owed the gospel to all men — to the Barbarian as much as to the Greek; to the unwise as well as to the wise. He was therefore ready, as far as it depended on himself, to proclaim the gospel at Rome. He was not ashamed of it, for it was God's power to save men. It meant salvation to every one who believed it. The believer of the gospel is assured of a full

salvation — a salvation to be known and enjoyed as a present salvation. What assures this to the believer is the blessed fact that the gospel contains a full revelation of the righteous character of God. The gospel proclaims God's right, or title, to show grace — that there is no contradiction between righteousness and grace in Him. It is this revelation of the harmony of divine grace and divine righteousness that assures the believer of the gospel that he is saved. The revelation is for faith. Faith therefore, — i.e., the believer — possesses the revelation. It belongs to him. It is his right to enjoy it. It is his privilege to be in the full comfort of the revelation.

It is the failure of preachers of the gospel to emphasize this blessed revelation of the apostolic gospel that accounts for the doubts and lack of assurance of salvation of large numbers of believers in the present day. May God raise up among His people everywhere faithful proclaimers of the gospel revelation that God, through the cross of Christ, has maintained His right to show grace — full, free grace to sinners. Under such preaching we shall see healthier converts and brighter saints. The cross of Christ is the full revelation of what the wrath of God is. No mere governmental earthly and temporal judgments, however severe and terrible, could be an adequate expression of God's absolute and eternal wrath. It was not until the cross, that men had a full revelation of God's estimate of sin. There, infinite and divine wrath was fully told out. God showed all that it is as He poured it out on the holy head of His beloved Son.

What a spectacle that scene was for both angels and men! How impressive! How solemn! God revealing to all His intelligent creatures the due, the exact due, of sin!

If God has made manifest in the cross of Christ the exact measure of what sin must receive at His hand, it is necessary that men should learn that it is impossible for them to come into the court of God and clear themselves of the charge of guilt that in righteousness deserves such wrath as the cross is a revelation of. Men need to be convicted of the absolute impossibility of giving a justifiable reason for their sins, that they are absolutely without excuse, before they will appreciate the grace that the gospel proclaims. From Romans 1:19-32, the apostle takes up the various pleas that men make why they should be exempted from the judgment of God against sin, and shows how unavailing these pleas are. He demonstrates the impossibility of any one establishing a valid excuse for sin. He shows that no one can clear himself of being justly charged with guilt.

First: If it is claimed that there are men who do not even know that there is a divine Being, he shows the claim cannot be allowed. Creation, both as a whole and in detail, is incessantly declaring there is a Creator, a God over all. It is a demonstration of both the eternal power and divinity of the Maker of all things. The responsibility and accountability of the intelligent finite creature is involved in this testimony of creation. No one, then, can excuse himself for violating the nature and character of his relation to the Creator — a creation of which he knows himself to be a part. As rational beings, all men owe subjection to their Creator, and sin in every form is in violation of this subjection, but no valid excuse can be made. No plea for violating creation's witness will stand. It is inexcusable guilt (Romans 1:19-20).

Second: It is sometimes said there are hosts of men whom God has abandoned; that He has left to indulge themselves in their lusts; are they then to be blamed for sinking into low and degrading vices? The excuse will not avail. It is true that God, in governmental dealings, because men have turned away from Him and have chosen to indulge their lusts, has given them over to the vices they love. But notwithstanding this, there is in them innately (such is the constitution of their being)

a sense of the justice of God in sentencing them to death. They know they deserve to die. They know the sentence by which they have been condemned to die is absolutely just. This is true of the lowest, of the most degraded and abandoned. None, then, can excuse themselves, or their sins, in the court of God on the ground of His having given them over to judicial blindness. His governmental ways will not be a protecting shield against the charge of guilt (Romans 1:32).

## 01.02 Romans 2

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### Romans 2:1-29

Third: There are those who say, "But we are not so low and degraded as the great mass of the poor, ignorant, blind heathen. We know better; we condemn their vulgarities and vices. Are we to be judged along with them?" Especially in so-called Christian lands, where the light of the truth of God shines more or less brightly, is there a large class of people who are thus making their superior light and knowledge a reason why they ought to be exempted from eternal judgment. But in the day when a just God will judge, their plea will not stand. It will be proof rather of despising the riches of God's goodness, forbearance and long-suffering, and of refusing to repent. It will be evidence of a hardened, impenitent heart.

God is just. He will judge justly in the day of judgment. Righteousness will be the principle on which He will judge. If any one can produce in the court of the judgment-day a record that will prove that he has been a seeker of glory, honor and incorruptibility, his record will be approved. But who will be able to produce such a record? But if righteousness requires the approval of the record (supposing it possible for such a record to be produced), it would necessarily require the disapproval of a record that will be proof of disobedience and sin. Will there be any whose record will not be that?

If, then, righteousness is the principle on which the judgment will be carried out, it will be in vain for any to hope for exemption from judgment on the ground of having better light and knowledge than the poor, ignorant heathen. God will not respect persons when He judges the deeds and thoughts of men. Those who have sinned without having special advantages and privileges will receive the due reward of their sins. The guilt of those who have sinned under greater light and knowledge will be all the greater. Righteousness will demand a judgment commensurate with the guilt. Light and knowledge will not be accepted as an excuse for sin.

If Romans 2:1-16 thus clearly insists on the inexcusable culpability of those who boast of light and knowledge above their more unfortunate fellowmen, sunken in vice, we are now to learn how the case of the Jew stands. By the will and authority of God, he occupies a specially exalted position among men. He had received a divine commission, had been called to be Jehovah's witness and the exponent of His will. Set thus in the place of a light, guide and teacher to all men by divine authority, his responsibility was peculiarly solemn. How has he met it? Why, instead of being a bright and shining light for God, a true and faithful witness that Jehovah was the one only and true God, by his idolatry and incessant disobedience he has become the occasion and instrumentality of God's being blasphemed among the Gentiles. He has incurred very great guilt. A Jew might answer, while admitting all this, that circumcision protected him from judgment by God. The apostle exposes the utter insecurity of such a retreat. No Jew would be willing to have an uncircumcised man who kept the righteousness of the law counted as a circumcised man. He, then, must submit to being counted as an uncircumcised man if he breaks the law. It is not the formal ordinance of circumcision that makes one a really circumcised man; for circumcision to be

real must be of the heart. No Jew has the right to count himself to be really a Jew unless he is one inwardly (Romans 2:17-29).

## 01.03 Romans 3

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### Romans 3:1-31

If a Jew objects that this makes formal circumcision useless, and that there is no good in being outwardly a Jew, the apostle answers that many advantages and privileges belong to those who have been outwardly circumcised, the principal one being the guardianship of the "oracles of God." Here, alas, the Jew had signally failed.

He might still argue, admitting the failure, that having put them in trust with the faith, God could not possibly nullify it. If He should finally judge them, He would falsify His character. To maintain His righteousness with those among whom He had deposited His oracles, He must exempt them from judgment. The argument means that God cannot vindicate His righteousness in the day of judgment, if He takes account of the sins of a Jew. To silence this the apostle appeals to Psalms 51:4. Just as He took account of the sins of David, and was justified in doing so by David himself, so in the day of judgment the right of God to take account of sins will be fully justified. He will overcome every one who thinks to call it in question. It will be better to make every man a liar rather than challenge God's right to judge sin.

If refuge be taken under the plea that the unrighteousness of the Jew will commend the righteousness of God, the answer is, "That destroys God's right to judge at all. Every Jew is anticipating the judgment of God upon the world; but on this principle it never could be."

Besides this, it implies that the truth of God is dependent, for example, on my lie to abound to the glory of God; but this means that it is my right to sin — that it is a justifiable thing to say, "Let us do evil that good may come." But, the apostle says, The judgment of such is just.

Thus every argument is met, and the Jew is left without a single reason why he should be exempted from judgment in the day when God will call men to an account about their sins. He is in no better case than the Gentile. All Jews and all Gentiles are under sin. All are chargeable with guilt.

Thus far the apostle, saving a single exception, has been reasoning without appealing to the Scriptures. Every argument has been forceful, and there is no escape from the conclusion that not a single man can offer a valid excuse for his sins in the court of God. But before he drops the subject he adds now many scriptures to show that they confirm his reasoning. Their testimony is that every mouth is stopped, that the whole world is guilty; and this is just what he has been proving.

He concludes now by insisting on the absolute impossibility of a man's justifying himself before God by deeds of law. The law convicts of sin. It does not clear the guilty, but affirms the guilt. It must be useless, then, to seek justification before God by it.

We have seen that all men, without exception, are chargeable with sin. Not one has any valid excuse. No one can put in a plea that his case must be treated as an exception. Though varying in

degrees of guilt, there is not so much as one who is not guilty. All being guilty, all are under the necessity of having to stand before the throne of God's judgment to receive the due, the righteous due, of the deeds done in the body. In Romans 3:21-31 we learn of a provision of God for a release from this necessity. There is a way in which a guilty sinner, deserving everlasting judgment, can be righteously delivered from it. This must engage our attention now.

Let us consider, first, What is needful for a holy and righteous God to righteously set a sinner free from the necessity of receiving the righteous due of his sins? Is it possible for God to forgive sins without conserving His holiness? Surely not. Can He cancel the charges of guilt against a sinner at the expense of His righteousness? Certainly He cannot. It is as impossible for Him to violate His holiness, or ignore His righteousness, as it is for Him to lie. If, then, He forgives sins, if He cancels the charges of guilt, if He shows even the least mercy, if He exercises grace at all in dealing with sinners, it must be in such a way that the questions, Where is His holiness? and, Where is His righteousness? are fully answered. He must have what He can point to as being full vindication. Grace, with Him, must be in every way above question. The matter may be put very simply. Is God righteous in setting a sinner free from the claim of everlasting judgment? What is God's answer to this question? Christ in heaven, "whom God has set forth a mercy-seat." The apostle is alluding to the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat of Leviticus 16:1-34. Suppose one asking an Israelite, How can God dwell among you? How can He vindicate His holiness and yet dwell in the midst of such a people as you? the answer was, The blood-sprinkled mercy-seat. So, now, to the question, Can God be righteous in canceling sins and reckoning a sinner righteous? the answer is, Christ in heaven as a lamb that has been slain is the fullest vindication of His righteousness in doing so. He is there as the One who gave Himself for sins. He is there as the One who paid the full price for the righteous title to redeem. He is there as the One who by offering Himself as a sacrifice unto God has conserved His holiness and maintained His righteousness. The sacrifice by which this was accomplished was the ransom-price which had to be paid that God might be righteous in delivering a sinner from the necessity of receiving the due of his sins. Christ, then, by becoming a substitute for sinners, and making a propitiatory sacrifice, has procured for God the righteous title to save sinners; has put into His hand, so to speak, the title to redeem; has made it consistent for Him to set sinners free from the claim of eternal judgment.

Thus far I have spoken of the righteous title. We will now consider God's exercise of it. In the scripture before us we learn something about it. In times before the cross, we are told that God used it anticipatively. In forbearance He passed over sins in anticipation of the atoning sacrifice He had foreordained. He gratuitously pretermitted sins. The Old Testament believers were released from the necessity of having to stand before the judgment-bar of God to be judged for their sins. It was grace in God, but grace in forbearance in anticipation of a sacrifice that would be a complete vindication of the grace.

It was not from any merit in themselves that the Old Testament believers were released from the eternal due of their sins. They were children of wrath as truly as ourselves, but they will not come into judgment any more than we, because it was a righteous thing for God to act in grace in view of a substitutionary propitiation that would be an unanswerable defence of it.

Now Christ in heaven as the Lamb that was slain is the declaration that this grace of God in Old Testament times was both holy and just. His presence there as the One who died for sins

proclaims the righteousness of God in His pretermission of sins — that the Old Testament saints were righteously released from the wrath of God which their sins deserve. Their salvation and eternal blessing thus stand on an immovable foundation. But that which proclaims how just God was in the grace He exercised in Old Testament times proclaims also how just He is in New Testament days. He is now exercising His righteous title to justify, to cancel sins, to release from the charge of guilt. It is, as we have seen, through Christ's shedding His blood that this righteous title to remit sins exists. In delivering from them; in setting free from their due; in not keeping them in the account of charges, but canceling them, He is justly exercising that title which the sacrificial death of Christ gives Him. Christ gone into heaven, in the efficacy of a death which His resurrection declares, is a perpetual witness that God is just. He is also the witness that God is the justifier of those who believe. He is perpetually proclaiming that God is freely using His righteous title to justify those who seek shelter from judgment under the sacrificial death of Christ.

Through the redemption — the releasing — that is in Christ Jesus, there is a gratuitous justification for sinners; a justification freely bestowed in a grace that is vindicated against any charge of unholiness or unrighteousness.

Another point to be considered is, On what principle does God use His righteous title to act in grace? The answer is, Faith. Faith is the one only condition of partaking of the blessing God has a just title to give. It was believers, in Old Testament times, as we have seen, whose sins God pretermitted. It is believers that He justifies now. Faith is thus shown to be the principle on which God exercises His title to act in grace. He has a good right to be gracious, to act in grace, and all are free to profit by it, on the condition of faith.

Now this is the glorious revelation which the gospel of God declares. In it the righteousness of God is revealed. It proclaims God's righteous title to deliver from judgment those who deserve to be judged forever. It is saying to sinners (and all have sinned), God is the One who justifies. He is the justifier. He justifies freely. He justifies on the principle of faith. Here is a righteousness which is for all; and all who believe are securely sheltered by it. What a grand message to be proclaimed to men everywhere! But if God is the justifier, and justifies on the principle of faith, there can be no boasting. The principle of faith excludes it absolutely. No one can claim a better right to be justified than another. The privilege of faith cannot be offered to any without offering it to all. If a sinner of one class or condition of men can have the opportunity to believe, and thus be justified, then a sinner of any class or condition of men can have the same opportunity. Justification is simply on the principle of faith. Works in no wise enter into it. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has anything to do with it. If God can justify a Jew on the principle of faith, He can justify a Gentile in the same way. There is no difference. It is gratuitous in any case. No one has a claim upon God for His grace. A Jew might think this nullifies law, but it is not so. On the contrary, it confirms the law. The law convicts all of sin; it brings all in guilty before God. It does not cancel sins. It does not dismiss the charges against the sinner. It affirms his guilt, and testifies to his need of grace — the free, sovereign grace of God. The grace that meets this need establishes the law which affirms the need.

God, then, can righteously cancel the charges of sins against sinners. This is founded on the sacrificial death of Christ. Christ's exaltation in heaven is the proclamation of it, and that God is exercising it on the principle of faith. Thus, believers in Jesus who was here in this world as sent of

God to make propitiation, are released from receiving the due of their sins, and stand before the face of God judicially cleared from every charge of guilt. They have been justified gratuitously through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; no merit in them or their works entering into the justification they have received from Him who has the righteous title to bestow it. In Romans 1:2, speaking of the gospel in the form in which it was authoritatively proclaimed, the apostle says that the prophets who uttered the Old Testament revelations distinctly promised it. Either in type, illustration, or formal prophetic statement, the Old Testament Scriptures anticipate the grand proclamation of the gospel of God. They are rich in foreshadows of it. It is true, clouds and mists surrounded these foreshadows; still, where there was faith, the clouds and mists were more or less penetrated. Faith learned more or less distinctly to anticipate what God was anticipating. As in the blaze of the full light that now shines we look back upon the Old Testament saints in the dimmer and partial light that was shining upon them, we can easily see how precious their foreshadows of our light must have been to them. There is, then, a unity between the gospel as partially told out then, and as fully declared now. The Old Testament promises and foreshadows are a divine seal on the New Testament unfolding of the grace that is in the heart of God. In Romans 3:21, in mentioning the righteousness of God that is now fully revealed in the gospel message of New Testament days, the apostle speaks of it as "witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets." Both the Law and the Prophets strongly emphasize the need of man. They insist on the hopelessness of his case except as God, in the sovereignty of His grace, takes him up. In doing this, they foreshadow the ground on which this sovereign grace is, in righteousness. The Law, by its typical system of sacrifices, clearly pointed out the way in which the need of sinful men is met. It declared that God's way of delivering men from the due of their sins is by a substitutionary sacrifice; that only by such a sacrifice could God righteously release men from their guilt. In this testimony the Prophets abundantly joined. They urge again and again the complete ruin of man, and point out God's way of meeting that ruin. The doctrine of the Prophets is that by the provision of an acceptable sacrifice for sins sinners can righteously be set free from the due of their sins. The Law and the Prophets thus, in their partial unfolding of the righteousness of God, and in their anticipations of its complete unfolding as it is now since the Cross, are Old Testament witnesses that God is just in His grace, and of how He is just.

## 01.05 Romans 5

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### Romans 5:1-21

Now, in Romans 5:1-11 we have the practical results for the justified. Here we must remind ourselves that it is in no wise a question of how fully we are in the enjoyment of these results. This depends on the energy of faith. These most blessed consequences of God justifying us on the principle of faith may be enjoyed in greater measure by one than by another. There may be times when the same individual will be more fully in the enjoyment of them than at other times. But the apostle is not occupying us with this here. He is rather stating what are the normal consequences of justification for the believer.

Let us then seek to learn what these normal consequences are. The first practical result of justification by faith mentioned by the apostle is "peace with God." If God is the justifier, if He sets a believing sinner before His face in an abiding, unchangeable righteousness, then all controversy about sins between God and that soul is ended forever. By justifying him, God Himself has ended it. He has put the believing sinner before His face in righteousness, and no more charges up his sins against him. He no more presses upon him the need of answering to God for his sins, so far as bearing their penalty is concerned. This is peace — peace with God. The force of the expression is peace as respects God. Through the instrumentality of our Lord Jesus Christ there is for the believer — the spiritual child of Abraham — peace as regards God. On the ground of the sacrifice of Christ God is for him, not against him. On account of the work of the Cross, he being now a believer, God has ended His controversy with him, What a blessed result of justification this is! God for us! God no longer maintaining His controversy with us! And this blessed result, let us remember, is true for "all them that believe."

Another result is the God-given privilege of entering by faith into the grace in which we stand. Under law, the children of Abraham (his spiritual children) could not do this. The grace in which they stood was clouded. Law was a hindrance to them. The privilege of taking practically the place of sons was not given them. But now, through the instrumentality of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the ground of His atoning sacrifice, the privilege of entering by faith into the grace in which we stand is given. It is in grace we stand. God gratuitously sets the believer before His face in unchanging favor, and grants him now the privilege of enjoying that favor without a cloud. This too is the right, a God-given right, of "all them that believe" — a blessed consequence indeed of justification by faith! A third result is the liberty of soul in which the believer can now anticipate and await the day in which God will display Himself. The justified may calmly contemplate the glory of God, and rejoice in it. God has made them meet for it. And since the glorious revelations of which the cross of Christ has been the occasion, no clouds nor mists remain to disturb the mind in thinking of the day when there shall be a full display of God. The Cross has settled every question concerning the believer's right to be with God in that day. It has disposed of everything that would make that day a thing to be dreaded. The glory of that day is the hope of those whom God has justified. It is their privilege to anticipate it with unspeakable joy. A fourth result of justification by faith is the joy to be

found in trials. The trials of the justified are innumerable. Justification does not exempt from them, but it gives power to rise above them. It enables the soul to value the priceless blessings they minister. But what are these blessings? First, with the eye on the coming glory, the trials are judged as incomparable with it. They thus become "light afflictions, which are but for a moment," soon to pass away, and are thus easy to be endured. Trials, then, develop patient endurance — one of the marked characteristics of our blessed Saviour. How precious is fellowship with Christ in patient suffering! We may well endure trial to experience the preciousness of it.

Experience is next mentioned as the product of patient endurance. In patiently enduring trial, we prove how good the will of God for us is. We gain a practical experience of His thoughtful care, of the sufficiency of His love and the resources of His grace for us. We get to know Him better, to know better what His heart is. We realize better how Christ sympathizes with us, and we understand better what His own path was; that path of which He could say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places" (Psalms 16:6). We thus learn by a practical experience of it to say, with Him, "Yea, I have a goodly heritage." How immeasurably blessed is such an experience! But let us remember that it is in patiently enduring our trials that we find this precious experience.

We are next told that "experience works hope." As, in the path that leads to the glory, we experience what the God of glory is, how that glory brightens! As by patient endurance we learn experimentally the love and care and tender mercies of Christ in His never-failing ministry to us as He guides us on our way, how we are constrained to say, "What will it be to be with Him!" It is thus experience works hope. It is thus experience strengthens in us the desire to realize the hope that is set before us. The apostle now assures us that hope makes not ashamed. The path we are in bestows upon us no worldly honors. The world disdains it, looks contemptuously upon it; but, with the light of our glorious hope shining upon it, we are not ashamed. Our hope, too, is an unfailing, unfading hope. Worldly hopes fail, and disappoint those who wait for them; but he who patiently endures the trials of the path of the justified will never be disappointed. He will never be made ashamed. As he draws nearer and nearer to the consummation of the glory he is waiting for, his confidence in its realization strengthens. He grows steadily stronger in hope because along the way he enjoys the love of the God of his hope. It is shed abroad in his heart. The God of eternity, with whom he is to eternally dwell, is the God of love — love already manifested and filling the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit that indwells the believer.

Here we must notice that the gift of the Spirit to indwell the body of the believer is a blessing from God that accompanies justification by faith. All who are justified by God have the Spirit. The Spirit is now given, since the death and resurrection of Christ, to all the children of Abraham — to all them that believe. All who are justified by God have the Spirit as the power of realizing and enjoying His love. It is the Spirit who sheds it abroad in the heart. But while the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of the justified, it is not there that its full measure is to be found. For this we must ever turn to the Cross. It was there that the love was fully manifested. The love displayed in the cross of Christ is a love for sinners, for those who are without God, helplessly under the eternal doom of sin. It was for such Christ died. In this death of Christ for sinners God displayed what His love toward us is. In thus displaying His love toward us He commends it as surpassing all other love. Love in God finds all its motives in Himself, not in the objects toward which it goes out.

Love of that character is free to provide itself with the means by which to justify the objects toward which it goes out. It supplies itself with the basis on which it justifies itself for being the kind of love it is. This basis is the blood of Christ — His sacrificial death.

If then the blood of Christ is love's vindication of itself, and the basis on which it goes out to sinners, it is the basis of the sinner's justification, the basis on which God acts in justifying.

Here I must call attention to the difference between justification by blood and justification by faith. Justification by blood is justification on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ is God's title, or right, to justify. It does not mean that because Christ died for all, that therefore everybody is justified, but that He died for all as providing a righteous basis for God to justify. But the principle on which He justifies is faith. It is only the sinner who believes that is justified. The actual justification of the sinner, therefore, is individual. We are all individually justified when we believe. Hence we may speak of being justified by faith. But God's act in justifying us individually when we believe, i.e., on the principle of faith, is based on the blood — the sacrifice of Christ. Looking thus at our justification as based on the work of the cross, we may speak of being justified by blood. It is not that there are two ways of justification. There is only one way. This we may state as justification by or on the principle of faith, on the basis or ground of the blood of Christ. In Romans 5:9 it is the ground of justification that is in the mind of the apostle; so he says, "Justified by His blood." But if a righteous basis for our justification has been provided through the death of Christ, He who died to provide this has risen from the dead; He is a risen, living Christ, and believers live by and in Him. He is their life. He is thus our salvation from wrath. He as the living One, the source of life to us, the One by whom and in whom we live, stands forever between us and wrath.

We were enemies, but by the death of His Son God has reconciled us to Himself. By the power of the love displayed in the sacrifice of the cross, God has won our hearts. We are now no longer enemies. But, being reconciled, our full and final salvation is bound up with Him who is our life. We live by and in One who, having triumphed over death, can never again be brought under its power. Death, then, can never have power over those who live by Him. Their full and final salvation is thus assured by His life. And here let us remind ourselves that this is true for all the justified. All whom God has gratuitously justified; all whom He has set before His face in unchanging righteousness on the ground of the sacrificial death of Christ, are eternally secure in that place, because they live by Him who has brought them there. The power of life in Him must be applied to their bodies as well as His if they live by Him. They shall be saved by His life — finally and completely saved — finally and completely conformed to Him, their bodies made like His. All the justified are assured of such a salvation. It is a necessary consequence of justification.

There is yet one other result of justification mentioned by the apostle. The justified, knowing God as the author and revealer of such a full salvation, glory in His being what He is. He reveals Himself in the salvation He provides. Those who are the happy subjects of it glory in Him as thus revealed.

There is another thing to call attention to. It is the place our Lord Jesus Christ has in connection with all these blessed consequences of justification. It is by, or through Him we have them. We must notice how the apostle emphasizes this. If he speaks of having peace with God, he adds, "through our Lord Jesus Christ"; if of access into the grace in which we stand, he reminds us it is

"by" Him we have this access. If he alludes to our being saved from wrath, he tells us it is "through Him." If he refers to joying in God, he insists that it is "through our Lord Jesus Christ." If he speaks of having received reconciliation with such a God as the salvation He has provided reveals Him to be, he reminds us it is by or through Him. Thus again and again our attention is fixed on the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ is the One to whom we are indebted for all these immeasurable blessings which are the portion of the justified. His sacrificial death is the ground on which they are ours. How well may we sing, "Oh, what a debt we owe"!

We have seen that not only is salvation from wrath the assured portion of those who are justified by God on the ground of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, but that they live by and in the living and risen One. We have also seen that the power of resurrection which has already been applied to the body of our blessed Lord, in its due season will be applied to the bodies of the justified. Our salvation will not be a fully completed salvation until this is done. But such a salvation is assured to the justified.

If, then, there is power in Christ, the living, risen Christ, to conform the bodies of the justified (whether it be the mortal body or the dead body) to His own resurrection body, there must be power in Him to use the mortal body as a vessel for the display of this life: there must be power in Him to produce practical holiness in those who have life in Him. Nothing in the life, walk and service of the justified that is not produced by Him can be fruitfulness for God. The living, risen Christ, then is the power of practical deliverance from the power of sin still dwelling in the bodies of the justified. This practical salvation from the power of indwelling sin is involved and included in the expression, in Romans 5:10, "We shall be saved by His life."

Now, before we proceed with the epistle, it is important that this should be clearly understood. From this point on, it is not a question of how a guilty sinner can be saved from the necessity of having to stand before God, to be judged for his sins — the deeds done in his body, but it is a question of how a person — who has already been saved from that dreadful necessity — can be saved from the present dominion of the sin that dwells in him. It is not a salvation from a future judgment of sins that is being considered, but a day by day salvation from a power that is realized to be ever inwardly present. Sin dwells in the mortal body, how can it be nullified? That is the great question. How can the tyranny of sin dwelling in the body be overcome? Can practical deliverance from the dominion of indwelling sin be realized?

Here many serious and fatal mistakes have been made. Many, not realizing that the living, risen Christ is the power of deliverance, have sought to curb the activities of indwelling sin. They have endeavored to resist it and fight it down. With many the conclusion has been accepted that it is not only a hopeless struggle, but that they have no resource. They say, "We must go on in sin." They abandon the struggle and give up the very idea of ever in this life realizing deliverance from the power of sin. They reason that under grace it is permissible to continue in sin. Some carry the argument so far that they justify continuing in sin on the ground that the grace of God abounds by it. It is an unholy argument — a shocking abuse of grace.

Another mistake, often made, is that the struggle with indwelling sin, to repress and overcome it, is the normal Christian experience. They consider that the struggle and the exercises connected with it are the sure proofs of being a Christian. They would look upon one who has found deliverance, and lives in the sense and joy of it, as being presumptuous and treading on very dangerous

ground. With them the cry, voiced by the apostle, where he says, "O wretched man that I am," is the very acme of Christian attainment. They, too, thus give up the idea of deliverance from the power of indwelling sin.

Others again consider that the struggle with the inward evil indicates that the Holy Spirit has not been received. Some of those who hold this view contend that we must die to sin. They constantly urge upon us that we must crucify self, that we must persist in the process of self-crucifixion until we have succeeded in eliminating the inward evil altogether. They argue that the Holy Spirit and sin cannot dwell together, that the body must be made a holy body — a sinless body, before the Holy Spirit can come into it to make it His habitation. Some, a few, have persuaded themselves that they have been successful in their efforts to destroy self, and that, in their cases, the mortal body has actually become a sinless body. Many more are struggling hard to attain that result. But there are others who would strenuously refuse such teaching as I have been referring to, who yet hold that the Holy Spirit does not indwell the body of one who has not learned or apprehended what is the real power of deliverance from the reign of the indwelling sin. According to their view the believer, who is passing through the exercises and experiences which are described and explained in the portion of the epistle we are about to consider, is not yet in Christ. While they have a more or less clear understanding of the character of the exercises and experiences themselves, they yet regard the one who is passing through them as still "in the flesh." For them he is neither in Christ nor in the Spirit.

Now all these views, and others, more or less akin to them, are erroneous. The section of the epistle that is now to be before us fully answers them. To enter intelligently on the study of it, it is needful to mark the character of it as distinguished from that of the section we have already reviewed. In this no question of the sinful nature inherent in all men was raised. There is no guilt attaching to the children of Adam for having a fallen, sinful nature. They are not responsible for it, will not be judged for it at the great white throne. They are, however, responsible for allowing it to act. Guilt attaches to the allowing the acts. It is for the deeds done in the body men are responsible. This is what constitutes them guilty. It is their guilt — the deeds done — that they will have to face and be judged for at the great white throne.

We have already seen that what characterizes that part of the epistle we have gone over is the ground and principle on which God gratuitously and righteously delivers a guilty man from the necessity of being judged for what he is guilty of, from having to endure the eternal penalty of his sins.

Nothing of this is found in the next part of the epistle. The wrath of God, as the deserved due of sins, is not contemplated here. It is not this that causes the exercises and experiences that are described. We are not in any way occupied with a soul that is fearing the judgment of the great white throne and is seeking deliverance from it. This has been fully considered in the previous chapters, and peace with God established on a secure basis. But what we find here is a soul that, having deliverance from eternal judgment, and being so in the sense of the love of God in providing such a deliverance for him, earnestly wants now to live for God. He wants to serve God in a life of holiness. He wants his life now henceforth to be one of fruitfulness for God. Hitherto his body has been a vessel for the use of sin, for Satan's use, now he wants to be a vessel for the use of God. But with these desires, purposes, aims, longings and aspirations, he finds in himself a

power that hinders him from realizing what he so ardently desires. By this power — the power of evil within him, an indwelling, fallen, sinful nature — he is turned from normal Christian occupation (the enjoyment of Christ) to self-occupation and introspection. He longs to be delivered from this power. He feels what terrible bondage it is to be so helpless under a power which, the more he struggles against it, the more miserable he gets. It is a wretched condition to be in. The exceedingly sinful thing that is in him, his fallen, sinful nature, seems to be triumphant. It is reigning in his body. Is there a power that is greater than this power of indwelling sin? — a power equal to the deliverance out of this wretched self-occupation and miserable introspection? — a power of sufficient energy to produce holiness notwithstanding an ever-present sinful nature? — to produce fruit for God, to use the body as a vessel for the display of the life of the risen Christ, though sin still dwells in it?

Yes, thank God, there is such a power. Only it needs that we be turned to the place where it is to find it, and be conscious of its workings. It is this need that the second part of Romans meets and provides for. It turns us to the place where the power for living the life of Christ practically is to be found. To be occupied with it there is to be practically under the delivering power, and practically delivered from the power of indwelling sin. This part of the epistle, then, answers the question, Where do the justified find power to live practically by Christ? Where do they find power to display the life of the risen Christ in their mortal bodies?

We shall now turn to it to follow the apostle's discussion of the question. May the blessed Spirit guide us in doing so. And may we be helped to a fuller and deeper apprehension of the deliverance that the God who righteously justifies the sinner that believes, has provided for the justified to enjoy. The blessings which grace bestows along with justification by faith are all, as we have seen, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now this suggests the idea of many being involved by the act of one, and sharing the results of that act. Possibly the thought was before the apostle's mind as an objection raised by some to his teaching. At all events, he fully indorses the idea. If the word "wherefore" is changed to the expression, "with reference to this" (which is really the force of the words in the original), the meaning is made more simple. Thus the apostle's argument is: With regard to the justified being involved in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and sharing in its results, it is the same as it is with sin and death coming into the world by one man. Many are involved by the one sin of Adam, and share in the results of that sin.

There is no other explanation of the fact that the children of Adam universally have a corrupted moral nature. The moral nature of man was first corrupted in him — our progenitor. Having become corrupted in him, it has passed on naturally as an inheritance to his descendants. They have a fallen, sinful nature through him. All his children are thus involved in his fall and ruin — the many involved by the act of the one. As regards death, it is the penalty of sin. It was by sin that death came to Adam, but the death that came thus to him has passed on to his descendants. Involved in his moral ruin by his sin, deriving from him his fallen, sinful nature, to be righteously exempted from the death he brought in by sin, his children must establish a right to live. Not one has ever done this. They all sin, and so death justly passes to them. In the holy government of God it would be impossible to exempt from death the sinning children of Adam, although it is not their sinning that brought death into the world. It was brought into the world by the sin of Adam. It came in thus under the government of God as penalty for sin, and it necessarily passes to all that sin — which all do.\* Righteously, therefore, all die.

{\*The apostle is not here taking the case of infants and idiots into consideration. It is quite true that they have, as an inheritance from Adam, a corrupt nature, and die. They are, so far, involved by his one act of disobedience. Still, when the apostle says, "For all have sinned," he must be exempting infants and idiots. He surely exempts them in Romans 3:23. Those who die in infancy, in irresponsibility, are exempt from a judgment of "deeds done in the body." It is of those in responsibility that the apostle says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Even the irresponsible die, for they are linked by the body with the old creation which must pass away. But there is no reason why they will not have part in the first resurrection. If we view them in their irresponsibility as exempted from judgment, their case presents no difficulty.} The law did not alter this. It was a special system of dealing with man; a system in which sin was taken note of in detail, and under which sin became transgression, and was thus shown to be in nature and character enmity to God. If death thus rightly reigned under law, it is still true that it rightly reigned when and where there was no law; for it was not law that brought death into the world; it came in by sin, and sin was in the world before law. The principle, then, of many being affected by the act of one is clearly established by appealing to undoubted historical fact. The entire human race is involved in the one act of disobedience by which the moral nature of our progenitor became corrupted. The universal reign of death is a sufficient appeal to demonstrate the principle of many sharing in the consequences of the act of one.

Now Adam, looked at as the fountain-head of the stream of fallen, sinful humanity, a race of sinners, sharing in the disastrous results of his sinful act, is a "figure" of Christ. He, too, is the Head of a race, a spiritual race, all of whom are involved in His blessed obedience unto death, and share in its glorious consequences. The principles we have been considering are as true in connection with Christ as they are in connection with Adam.

However, before the apostle draws his conclusions from the argument he is using, he stops to point out certain features connected with those two fountainheads in which they stand in remarkable contrast, and in which Christ abundantly exceeds over Adam. While Adam is a type of Christ, and thus in certain features there is a similarity between them, there are three features in which there is dissimilarity. The dissimilarity consists in this, that in the case of Adam there is the measuring of penalty in exact righteousness; while with Christ there is a wealth of blessing that far exceeds the need that has to be met. It is a "much more" than the recovery of a position and condition that have been lost. It is the gaining a much higher place and a condition of blessing infinitely greater than those which were forfeited by sin.

Let us look at the three features in which the dissimilarity between the first man, Adam, and the Second Man, the last Adam, is so strongly emphasized.

First, there is a difference between "the offence" of the one and "the free gift" which is by the Other. By Adam's one offence death has been transmitted to "the many" who have sprung from him. The death that came to Adam as penalty for sin has passed on in that character to those that have descended from him. Now the "free gift" by Christ, conferred on "the many" to whom it is given to "live by Him," abounds for them far beyond their deliverance from death, the penalty of sin. It means for them life in the abundance of its power. It is "much more" than salvation from the death duly and righteously deserved. It is the positive reality and blessedness of living with God.

Again, there is dissimilarity between the effects of "the one sin" and the effects of "the gift." A state of condemnation was established by one sin. One sin produced a subsisting state of condemnation. One sin brought it in. The gift through Christ has established a state of righteousness. An abiding, subsisting state of righteousness is the effect of the gift of Christ. This established state of positive righteousness is "much more" than deliverance out of the state of condemnation. The gift does indeed deliver out of the state of condemnation, taking full cognizance of the accumulation of offences; but beyond the deliverance from the condemnation, there is the provision of a state of positive righteousness, which is one of abiding acceptance. This is a righteousness already produced, fully accomplished — a completed righteousness conferred by God in grace. How blessed to have it thus as the transcending favor of God! The third feature in which there is dissimilarity relates to the final results. Through the offence of the one, there has come in by the one a reign of death. It has been an absolute reign — a reign of irresistible power. Now on the other hand there are those "who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness." It is not merely deliverance from the power of death, from its reign and triumph, but a "much more," by which they themselves are "more than conquerors." By the power of the life grace confers on them, they themselves reign. The life they have is life through and in the living, victorious Man, Jesus Christ. In this life they reign. What an abundance of grace!

Now we have seen that in Romans 5:12-14 the apostle sets before us the features in which there is similarity between Adam and Christ; and in Romans 5:15-17 the features in which there is dissimilarity. In Romans 5:18-21 we get his conclusions. To rightly understand these we must keep in mind the dissimilarity as well as the similarity; the unlikeness as well as the likeness; the features in which there is contrast as well as the features in which there is resemblance. In other words, we must not forget the "much more" and the "abundance" of Romans 5:15-17 while we are considering the apostle's summing up of his argument.

There are three conclusions that the argument leads to. First, by one offence there was brought in for all men a state of condemnation. The one act of Adam operated in the way of establishing a subsisting state of condemnation for all men. So, too by one righteousness there has been brought in for all men an abiding state of righteousness. Before his fall Adam lived in a state of innocence. But it was living under conditions of testing, and so was not in an abiding state of righteousness. When he fell, he came into a new state. After he sinned, he was no longer under testing in innocence. He was in a new condition entirely. It was a state of condemnation. Condemnation was connected with the new condition in which he lived. This state of condemnation was brought in by his one offence. His one offence bringing in such a state, determined for all men a living in a state of condemnation.

Now Christ by His one righteousness has established an abiding state of righteousness. He is living in such a state. The abiding state of righteousness in which He lives is a provision He has made for all men. Just as Adam by his one offence passed out of a state of testing in innocence into a state of living under condemnation, so Christ by His one righteousness has passed out of a state of living in which He was in relation to sin (always personally sinless, of course), into a state in which He lives no more in reference to sin, but to God — a state of subsisting righteousness. He has passed out of a state in which He had to do with sin and death. He now lives in a state in which He no more has to do with them. He has established a state of abiding righteousness in the behalf of all men. The apostle is affirming here the all-sufficiency of the provision of this state of

righteousness. It has been established as a provision for all men. It is available for all. If any have difficulty about it, let them remember the apostle, in the verse we are considering, is not speaking of the final results of either the one act of Adam or of Christ. He is speaking of the bearing of their acts. Just as the one offence of Adam was toward all for a state of condemnation, so the one righteousness of Christ is toward all for a state of subsisting righteousness of life.

Again, in speaking of a state of condemnation, he does not say "of life." Those who are living in this state are living in a state that is really death. When he speaks of a state of abiding righteousness, then he says, "of life." Those who are in this state are the only ones who are really living. They live by Him who has established a state of life in unchanging righteousness. In Romans 5:19 we get a second conclusion. By the disobedience of one the many springing from him have been caused to be sinners. They are sinners by the fact of inheriting his corrupt moral nature. So, too, on the other hand, by the obedience of Christ those who derive life and nature from Him, by that very fact have a life and nature in which they are righteous. They are not righteous in themselves, but in Him by whom they live. In Him they are holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable. In the life and nature they have derived from Him, the righteous One, they are in life and nature righteous. By His one obedience they have been caused to be righteous.

We must now look at the third conclusion — Romans 5:20-21. Here the apostle refers to the introduction of law as a special dealing with man. It did not bring in sin and death, but caused the offence to abound. It turned sin into transgression. It demonstrated sin to be, in its essential character, enmity against God. It was given as a special system of dealing with man for that very purpose. But law did not bring either sin or death into the world. They were already in the world when the law was given. If sin reigned unto death under law, it did before law also. Nevertheless, whether in the time of law or before it, wherever sin abounded grace has abounded in a far more abundant measure. In every age-time there have been those who received "abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness." They reigned in life — a life not derived from the first Adam, but from Him of whom he is a "figure." They were involved in the one obedience. They were sharers in the results of the one righteousness.

How glorious these triumphs of the grace that is through Jesus Christ! How glorious, whatever the age-time, whether before law, after law came, now, or in the age-times to come!

If now sin has reigned in death, the reign of grace through righteousness is unto eternal life. While Old Testament believers derived their life — the life in which they reigned — from Him that then was to come, yet they did not have the life in the abundance and fulness of its power in which it is possessed by those who receive it now. But even we who derive life from Christ in this Christian age do not yet possess it in its most abundant power. For this all receivers of the "abundant grace" must wait until life is possessed in its final condition. But this final condition — a condition that is permanent and eternal — is the assured portion of all the recipients of the grace that reigns through righteousness. All who derive life and nature from the second Fountain-head live by Him. Living by Him, they are more than victors. The end will be the completion of the triumph of grace, living by Him still, but having life in its final and unchanging condition.

Now we must notice that the apostle adds, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." He has fully justified the principle of many being involved in the act of one, and sharing in the consequences of the act. Thus, in adding here, "through Jesus Christ," he reaffirms the principles.

Christ, then, is a new fountain, or source of life. Those who derive life from Him — the receivers of grace, the justified — live by and in Him. This fact assures of final and complete salvation — a salvation that will embrace the body.

## 01.06 Romans 6

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### Romans 6:1-23

Having unfolded the character of the transcending triumph of grace over sin, the apostle is anxious that those who are participators in this triumph should be preserved from what is, alas, a common abuse of his doctrine.

Enemies of the doctrine of grace have sought to discredit it by charging it with making sin a necessity. There are those who understand the doctrine to mean that it permits going on still in sin. Flagrant violations of holiness have been defended by the plea that it is allowable under grace to continue in sin — to indulge the lusts of the flesh. In many quarters it is taught that victory over sin is not to be counted on as long as we remain in our earthly life. It is said, "We have not yet received our sinless body, and as long as we have the old sinful body we must inevitably be subject to sin. It must have at least a certain measure of rule over us." But the apostle will not allow those who are in Christ, those who live by and in Him, to entertain such unholy deductions from his doctrine of grace. When he says, "What shall we say then?" he is speaking as one of the numerous subjects of the reign of grace. He speaks as representing those, once among the victims of sin, whose hearts have been laid hold of by the grace which is by the one Man, Jesus Christ, and who have thus come to be of Him — sharers with Him in the life and blessing of which He is the Fountain-head. On their behalf, in their name, we may say, he asks, "Does the doctrine of grace allow one to go on still in sin? Do we take the view that grace abounding over sin implies that sin, or a measure of it, is justifiable as furnishing occasion for the triumph of grace?"

How indignantly the apostle refuses the thought! With what vigor and earnestness he denounces such a conception of his doctrine! The thought is intolerable. It is an unholy implication. It would destroy the true character of grace; it would rob it of the reality of its triumph; it would mean serious damage to souls, as it would vitally affect the state of their minds and the condition of their hearts. No! Such a view is to be wholly condemned. Those who are participators in the triumph over sin through Jesus Christ are to put the unholy thought far, far away. The authoritative apostolic declaration of the doctrine of grace demands it. Be it so that we still have our old sinful body, we can not allow that we must therefore sin more or less. That, indeed, would not be deliverance from the dominion of sin.

If it be said, "Our future deliverance is secure, but present deliverance is impossible," the answer is, That is not the apostle's teaching. He teaches and insists on a present deliverance from the dominion of sin. As our Lord in John 8:34 said, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." The doctrine of the apostle is the same. With him, being under grace and under sin is an impossibility. Those who are the subjects of grace should regard bondage to sin as incompatible with subjection to grace.

We come now to the apostle's discussion of the subject of present deliverance from the dominion of sin. We shall see that he divides his discussion into two parts. In the first he dwells on our title,

or right, to be in present practical deliverance from sin's dominion; in the second he shows how deliverance is practically attained, and what it is found to be when practically reached.

Before we begin to follow the apostle's argument, let us remind ourselves that all men, as sprung from fallen Adam, are victims of sin and of death. Those laid hold of by grace, which is by Jesus Christ, have become His seed (Isaiah 53:10). As thus sprung from Him, they are sharers in the eternal life which is in Him. This participation in eternal life in Christ Jesus is a blessing to be realized now, as well as in eternity. The subjects of grace have now the eternal life that is in Him. It is in that sense that they now live by and in Him. But living thus in connection with Him, i.e., as sprung from Him, they are of the position in which He is. They belong to it.

What then is His position? Here we must remember that Christ, in grace, once took our position under sin. He was not personally under it, but in grace entered into the position of being under sin in the behalf of those who were personally in that position. Having thus in grace taken the position, He died — death being the penalty of sin, and so the due of those in that position. It was a vicarious death; He could die in no other way. Having died thus atoningly in behalf of the victims of sin, in rising again He has taken up a new position, and is dead to the former position under sin, which in grace He had taken for those under sin.

Now, as we have already said, as sprung from Him we are of Him in His new position. We are of the position in which He is, and therefore dead to sin.

It is to this blessed fact that the apostle appeals in beginning his discussion as to our right to be practically delivered from the dominion of sin. His argument is this: Sin having had its reign over us to its legitimate end in death, and Christ having taken our place in subjection to it, we who have been laid hold of by His grace have passed out of that position from under sin. We are subjects of grace, and as such dead to sin. We have the right to be free practically from sin's power and rule. We have a positional deliverance which entitles us to live in happy subjection to grace, in the realization that sin's rights over us have all been annulled. We are freed completely from every claim of sin upon us, even from its claim to the use of the old sinful body. What a perfect deliverance grace has thus provided for us!

Alas, how little it is understood! How difficult it is to lay hold of the true conception of what our deliverance is! How few are in reality entering into what the apostle means when he teaches, as he does here, that the subjects of grace — those who are in Christ — are dead to sin!

Some, in their inability to lay hold of the real import of the doctrine of being dead to sin, deny it altogether. They insist that the fact of our having still the old sinful body is the clearest proof that we are not yet dead to sin. Others, while they do not deny that the doctrine is taught, and that there is a certain ideal sense in which it is true, yet deny that it can be practically true. Others still modify the form of the words in which the doctrine is taught, and say, "We ought to be dead to sin." In their teaching there is much exhortation to the effect that Christians should strive to die to sin. How forcefully sometimes we are exhorted to put the old man to death. But in all this teaching the true conception of what deliverance from sin is, being dead to sin, is lacking. The widespread misunderstanding of what being dead to sin is, shows how difficult it is for us to lay hold of it. Those who so zealously promulgate such teachings as we have referred to, in contradiction to the teaching of the apostle, will do well to weigh the incontestable argument of verses 3-7, in which the

fact of our being positionally in the place of death to sin is clearly demonstrated. Let us now turn to it. The apostle's first appeal to prove that we are in the position of being dead to sin is the significance of baptism. Baptism is the badge of discipleship to the risen Lord Jesus Christ. What makes it a suitable badge of discipleship to Him is that, as Peter tells us (1 Peter 3:21), it is a figure of salvation by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism being such a figure, shows that in our being baptized we were in figure put into the position of being dead with Christ. Furthermore, our being figuratively put into this position was in view to our living henceforth in a new life. But the new life our baptism calls for is one in the likeness of Christ's life in resurrection. Plainly then our baptism, though it is a figure, witnesses to a position of death to sin. It declares that Christ has died to sin (having in grace put Himself under sin to do so), and that we are in figure identified with Him in His position of being dead to sin, to be identified with Him in the life He is living as risen.

Now what baptism witnesses to, the gospel declares to be true of us. As having heard and received "the word of the truth of the gospel," we know that when Christ died, the old, fallen, sinful man was being judicially dealt with. We know that if One died in behalf of all men, judicially all men have died (2 Corinthians 5:14, Greek). Having heard and received the word of truth, by which we have become new creatures in Christ, we know that our old man (the man connected with the old position in Adam) has been crucified — judicially put to death. His claims to the body have been annulled in his judicial death. The body, therefore, which once was in the power of the old man, now belongs to the new man; and though yet unredeemed, is no more for the use of sin.

Even though still in our old body, we are of Him who died and rose again, and our body, though still a sinful body, belongs to Him; and as belonging to Him, it is not under sin's dominion. How manifestly we have title to be practically delivered from sin's power and rule! We are, positionally, delivered. Though we have still the old sinful body, as being in Christ we cannot be charged with being sinful men. We do not have to wait until we receive the redemption of the body to be in Christ. We are in Him now. We are His seed now by His grace having laid hold of us. We are thus constituted righteous; we are no more chargeable with our old state under sin than a dead body, a corpse, is.

Clearly then is our position demonstrated to be Christ's position of being dead to sin. But this implies and involves living with Him; and living with Him now, not merely by and by. We shall surely live with Him when we get our redeemed bodies, but we have title to live with Him now, while we are still in the old body. He lives no more under sin's dominion. He went under it once in grace, but by dying and rising again He lives in eternal deliverance from sin's power. As subjects of grace — as being in Him — we are in the same sphere of life in which He is, where sin cannot enter. It is not simply that we have life in Him, but that we live with Him; and living with Him implies living in practical deliverance from sin's dominion. The apostle is not yet ready, however, to take up the question of the practical deliverance. Other questions of serious moment must first be given attention to. The reason why many never get far along in the road to deliverance from sin's power is because they fail to take the very first step. Having established beyond question that the subjects of grace have title to be practically delivered from the dominion of sin, the apostle now points out what is the first step in the road to deliverance. What is it?

It is taking the right standpoint from which to look at ourselves. Many who are in Christ do not think of themselves as in Him. They think of themselves as in Adam. They think of themselves as under

sin, as necessarily so because of sin still dwelling in them. It is not true, however, that because we have still the sinful body, we are under sin. We are under sin as yielding to it, as serving it, as yielding the members of the body to its use; but we are not under sin as being still in the old body. We are thinking wrongly when we think of ourselves as under sin because we have still the old body of sin.

Now, to think rightly of ourselves is the very first step toward deliverance from the service of sin. The apostle tells us in Romans 6:11 how we should think of ourselves. He says, "Likewise reckon" — consider, think of — "yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God." We are still in our earthly life, but as in Christ we are entitled to think of ourselves as if we had died and were risen from the dead. It is this right thought of our position that the apostle presses upon us here.

Now another thing necessarily accompanies this right thinking of ourselves as if we were dead and risen. Viewing ourselves as connected with Christ in His position of having died to sin and living to God, we will consider that sin has no longer any title to the use of the mortal body. We will not consent to its reigning there; we will refuse that its lusts should govern us. We will look upon the members of our body as belonging to God, as if they were members of the new body which we are yet to receive. We will hold them to be instruments of righteousness — not of sin.

If now we take the apostle's standpoint of looking at ourselves as being in Christ, as if we were thus dead and risen and living to God, we shall then regard sin's title to our body as annulled, and that our Saviour-God has claims upon it, its members to be instruments of righteousness; and, as under these claims, there will be in us a purpose to have God's rights to our body realized. We will be actuated by the thought that God's title must be made good practically — that His title over us should be realized in practical life. The formation in our minds of this purpose, the establishment in our souls of this aim to be practically attained, carries us on a good step on the road to a life of practical deliverance from the dominion of sin; but until this purpose is formed, and the aim becomes the absorbing desire of our soul, progress toward a practical life of liberty from sin's power is impossible. Alas, how many are lacking here! They are content to drag on in weary bondage to sin with little or no purpose to be free from its rule. May the Lord use the apostle's exhortations in Romans 6:11-13 to establish in the souls of all the subjects of His grace an insatiable desire to be practically delivered from sin's power in its use of the body for any sinful purpose.

We have seen that the apostle teaches that the victims of sin, who have been laid hold of by the grace of Christ, who took their place under sin's dominion, are now connected with Christ in the new position He has taken up as risen from the dead. They are of Him. They live now — live by Him. Living by Him, they belong to Him, are in Him; and with Him are dead to sin, and have title to think of themselves from this point of view — as in Christ. It is their right to take the place of being of the risen Christ — to look at themselves from this standpoint.

Now it may be said, "From that standpoint it is true that those who are the subjects of this grace have title to be practically free from the service of sin; but title to deliverance from sin is one thing, and ability to use the title is quite a different one." It will be said, "It is one thing to look at my mortal body and think of it as subject to the claims of Christ, and quite another thing to keep from activity the sin that dwells in it." We are told, "It is quite right to regard our members as being instruments of righteousness and for the use and service of God, but it is another matter to hinder their being

used as instruments of unrighteousness."

We are thus reminded that there is a distinction to be made between title to be free from the service of sin and ability to make the title good practically. To this distinction we readily agree; but before we discuss the question of the power by which we live practically to God, and where we find that power, there are other questions which must be looked at first. We must first inquire, Are there any necessary hindrances in the way of being practically delivered from the rule of sin? Are there limitations to which practical deliverance is possible, and beyond which it is impossible?

If we turn back to the preceding dispensations we readily see that there were then subjects of grace — men who lived in faith, in the light of the prophecies of the grace that has been brought to us (1 Peter 1:10). They thus lived by the One of whom Adam was the figure, but they did not live in the abundance and fulness in which it is given to us to live (John 10:10). Life and incorruptibility were not then illuminated as they are now (2 Timothy 1:10). They lived the life of faith under limitations. Again, they did not have the full measure of God's estimate of sin as we have since the cross of Christ, and here we cannot fail to see a very great limitation which must very largely have affected their practical lives. Furthermore, the law, when it was given to Israel, must have been a very great limitation to the extent in which the life of faith could be practically maintained.

Here is a matter which requires careful consideration. It should be remembered that the law as a rule of life was given to Israel as a nation — to men in the flesh; and the children of faith were not separated from the rest of the nation; they were not exempted from the rule of life under which the nation was put. Being thus under the same rule of life as the rest of the nation, they were under restraints that made it impossible for them to take the place of children with God. While they were children in reality, they could not be children practically (Galatians 4:1-7).

Now, the rule of life under which they were put, as being a part of the nation upon whom it was imposed, is the strength of sin (1 Corinthians 15:56). It made the offense abound in them as well as in the rest of the nation. Being thus under an order of dealing which stirred sin in the flesh into activity, they were continually in bondage through fear of death (Hebrews 2:15). They could not be set free as long as that order of dealing with them stood. The law gave to sin an opportunity and advantage, and it was impossible for them to claim exemption from its penalty. They could never say sin did not have dominion over them.

Believers, then, under law, were under conditions of restraint — limitations which prevented the grace that had laid hold of them abounding in the fulness and abundance of its power. But Christ dead, risen and glorified, is the end of these conditions of restraint for believers. He is the end of the law for believers, whether it be for righteousness or for a rule of life. The subjects of divine grace are not under it now. This has been authoritatively declared, and with this declaration there has come also the assurance that "sin shall not have dominion over us" (Romans 6:14). In the apostle's statement, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace," we learn there is no necessary hindrance to those who are of Christ being now practically free from the service of sin. God is not now requiring His children to live by a rule which is the strength of sin. He has brought to a complete end, for believers, the whole system under which formerly He held them under restraint, and under which it was impossible to know and enjoy the complete measure of grace.

It is, then, the privilege of every child of God now to be practically delivered from the rule of sin. Deliverance from the dominion of sin is his present right. It is not to be thought of as an ideal, impossible of realization until the body is changed. It is to be maintained that the grace of God, which is by Jesus Christ, provides for all its present subjects not only eternal exemption from judgment, but also present freedom from the service of sin; and that God is not now imposing on them a rule of life that hinders their enjoyment of deliverance from sin's power. But the apostle's assertion that the subjects of grace are not under law is often disputed. Many still maintain that the law is the Christian's guide to right living. But freedom from it as the rule of life is most unequivocally stated by the apostle. There is not the least ambiguity about his expression of it. He is speaking, too, as the exponent and representative of Christianity. His statement is authoritative. Nevertheless, it is not accepted as being the truth by many. There are many who refuse it with horror. They say it means license to sin. They tell us freedom from law as a rule of life means lawlessness, indulging in sin as much as one pleases. But this is plainly a misconception of the apostle's teaching. It is a thorough misunderstanding of the character of divine grace. No one really entering into that grace, in which Christ took the place of the victims of sin, could conceive of it as meaning license to sin, or think it necessary that the subjects of that grace should be under law as a rule of life to keep them from sinning. That freedom from law means lawlessness, the apostle resents, and strenuously refuses. That it means license to sin is an intolerable thought to him. He exclaims most vigorously against it. All who submit to his authoritative statement of what the grace of God means, will join him in denouncing as a false conception the thought that freedom from the principle of law is liberty to indulge in sin — a thought to be put far away.

Having strongly denounced the idea as repulsive and intolerable, the apostle now proceeds, in Romans 6:16 to show what the misconception really means. To say, "If we are not under law, then let us sin as much as we like," means deliberately choosing to be the servants of sin. To willingly indulge in sin is to make one's self a voluntary servant of it. That should be self-evident. What is so manifest ought to expose the error underlying the statement that "because we are not under law, but under grace, therefore we may sin as much as we choose." It is plainly wrong: it certainly is not apostolic teaching. The apostle goes on to insist that it is not the form of teaching to which the subjects of grace have submitted themselves (Romans 6:17). They have received a different type of teaching altogether. They have surrendered themselves to a teaching of another character. Having received the apostolic teaching, that which he denounces as intolerable must be unholy and abhorrent to them.

Now, let us remark, the teaching that freedom from law as the rule of life means lawlessness, is not the teaching to which the Roman saints had given their adherence. Taking them as representatives of the saints of apostolic times, we may say, such teaching was not a part of the faith of those saints. It is therefore a teaching antagonistic to Christianity. Those who are seeking to introduce it into Christian teaching, who would make it a part of Christian instruction, are corrupting and subverting Christianity. It is therefore to be vigorously refused and strenuously opposed. The defenders of the apostolic faith must join with the apostle in refusing it, as a misconception of the character of Christianity, as unholy, and intolerable. But we must follow the apostle further. Having thanked God that the Roman saints were not adherents of such a false and unholy teaching, he tells them (Romans 6:18) that through the surrender of themselves to the right form of teaching, they were made free from sin, and are now the servants of righteousness. He

then exhorts them to let righteousness have the use of their members even as formerly they had allowed sin to use them (Romans 6:19).

Then, next, he contrasts the fruit. He says, When you were free from righteousness you lived in unholiness. You are now ashamed of the unholy lives you lived as the servants of sin. You were on the road that leads to and ends in death. But now as servants of righteousness you are living in holiness; and are on the road which leads to the final condition of life which is in prospect for all those who have become connected with the risen Christ.

We may now sum up the apostle's argument in the chapter: The grace that is by Jesus Christ has provided and secured, for those of whom it lays hold, a new position and condition of life in which they are entitled to be practically free from the service of sin. Though they are still in their old, mortal, sinful bodies, yet there is no necessary reason why these bodies should be under sin's power, or their members be yielded up to be used for sinful purposes. Christ, by whom we live, being the end of the law, both for righteousness or as rule of life, for those who have life in Him, we are not limited by what gives strength to the sin that dwells in us; hence there is full liberty for the life of Christ to manifest its power in using the body, though still mortal and sinful, to the glory of God. This is what the grace of God confers on those who submit themselves to the grace of Christ in His one obedience unto death. We are granted the inestimable blessing of living unto God. This is eternal life indeed. May we submit ourselves more fully to the grace that has made it our portion. But in spite of the plain and authoritative statement of the apostle, that we are not now under a rule of life that prevents our enjoying this liberty from sin's service, there are many who very mistakenly regard the principle of law as the only means by which a life of practical holiness can be produced. Notwithstanding the apostle's unequivocal statement that we are not under law, they insist that law is the power for holiness. Evidently, some in the apostle's day maintained this. It was necessary for the apostle to take up the question of law to show the effect of it upon a believer who undertakes to make it the rule of life. As we shall see, the question that is raised is, What is the power by which a believer lives a life of holiness and fruitfulness to God? Is it law that gives him strength to serve God, or is it Christ enjoyed by the power of the Spirit? Does the one who is in Christ find in the principle of law power to yield himself to God? Is it the principle of law that gives him ability to yield his members to righteousness? Is practical righteousness produced in those who are in Christ by walking after the law as a rule of life?

These are all serious, sober-minded questions. Every soul that the grace of Christ lays hold of sooner or later raises them. Finding themselves the objects of the love of God they cannot long enjoy that love as the Holy Spirit sheds it abroad in the heart without feeling themselves under the obligation to live to God. In their efforts to do so they find they need power to enable them to live to the honor and praise of God. We naturally suppose a life to the glory of God will result by making the law our rule of life. The supposition is an entire mistake. But the experience under the trial of it is necessary to manifest the mistake.

## 01.07 Romans 7

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Romans 7:1-25 This experience is explained and interpreted in Romans 7:1-25. The explanation of this experience answers definitely and authoritatively the question, Can the law give the Christian power for a life of holiness and fruitfulness to God?

We will now consider the apostle's statement of the effect of one who is in Christ making the law the rule of life.

It is of very great importance to notice that the apostle does not admit that God imposes the law as a rule of life on those who are connected with the risen Christ. He looks upon them as being dead to the law with Christ. He recognizes that in the past dispensation the subjects of divine grace were put by God into relationship with law — a relationship he illustrates by the marriage bond. If death removes the husband, the woman is no longer in the marriage bond. So too the death of Christ, as our representative and substitute, ends for believers their relationship with law. A woman whose husband is dead is free to be joined to another man. So also, since the death of Christ, the law cannot prevent those who are of Christ being joined to Him. Their bond with law having been dissolved by the death upon the cross, they are thus freed from it, and a new bond has been formed. By the Spirit of God, who is given to believers (to all believers since the ascension of Christ — John 7:39), those who are of Christ are united to Him in this new bond (Romans 7:1-4).

We must also note another thing. Whatever fruit for God there was in the practical lives of those who were of Christ before His death, it was not the fruit of their bond with law. That was a barren, fruitless bond. But the new bond, the bond by the Spirit, is not a fruitless one. The law's very prohibitions intensified the opposition of the natural man's sinful passions (Romans 7:5). For this reason it could not help the true children of faith to a life of fruitful service for God. But now, since the death of Christ, believers are delivered from the bond with the law, and are in a bond with the risen Christ, in which the Spirit of God is the energy of service — a service acceptable to God. Serving thus by the Spirit, they serve in newness of spirit; not now with minds in rebellion against the authority of God, but with hearts in subjection to His grace. The doctrine of the apostle, then, is that those who belong to Christ now, not only have title to be practically free from the law, but are in a bond with the risen Christ, the fruit of which is realized and enjoyed in the measure in which the Spirit, who is the power of the bond, is obeyed in His leading (Romans 7:5-6).

Here an objection presents itself. An ardent defender of the doctrine that the law is the rule of life for Christians, says, "If Christians are dead to the law, then the law is sin." The apostle's answer shows that it is in nowise so. Instead of its being sin, it convicts of sin. This was one of the purposes for which it was given; and no matter to whom it has to say — an unconverted or a converted man — it convicts of sin. Whoever undertakes to live by it finds the lusts it forbids are in him, and that the very prohibition is the occasion of their vigorous activity. One just converted usually delights, with more or less ecstasy, in the love of God, which the Spirit that dwells in him sheds abroad in his heart. While thus occupied in the power of the Spirit with the love of God, he is

not concerned or occupied with the sin that dwells in him. Without the law, it is not active (Romans 7:9). But as he begins to think of the claims which the love he has so much enjoyed has upon him, he assumes that the law is the power by which he is to meet those claims. He takes it up thus as the rule of his life. He finds, however, that he is continually being made aware of the presence in him of the prohibited lusts. Their activity has revived, and his conscience continually accuses him. What he took up for life, he finds to be a ministration of death — see 2 Corinthians 3:7. He has been deceived. The coming in of the law in this way as the rule of life, was the occasion of his being deceived. The result of the experience is the writing upon his conscience that he has no title to live — his conscience is under the sentence of death. He has to own that even as a child of God he has not the least title to live. The lesson thus learned is a good one; he has learned it through the law, though mistaken in taking it to be the rule of life. The law, then, is not sin. It is holy, and the commandment is "holy and just and good" (Romans 7:10-12).

There is yet another objection. The defender of the law as being the Christian's rule of life, considers the apostle's reasoning to imply that what is "good is made death" to the Christian. The apostle now shows that the objection is an entire misapprehension. Instead of the law being made death to a believer in Christ, as a ministration of death it shows how exceedingly sinful sin is. The fact that it is by means of what is good that sin works death in one who belongs to Christ, makes the deadly character of sin the more manifest. The objection, then, is shown to have no force (Romans 7:13).

We come now to the apostle's explanation of the exercises and experiences resulting from the mistake which so many believers in Christ make in taking the law to be the rule of life (Romans 7:14-20). To understand this explanation we must remember the apostle is not speaking of the exercises and experiences of an unregenerate man — of a man whose position before God is that of being in Adam — in the flesh. He is speaking of a regenerate man — a man in Christ; in the new bond, therefore, possessed by believers ever since Pentecost. He is a man indwelt by the Spirit. While he is not walking according to the Spirit, yet the indwelling Spirit is leading him. He is leading him as to his aims and purposes, and He is also leading him in his decisions as he passes judgment on the strife that he finds going on within him. Terrible as it all is, he is being led and taught of the Spirit.

Let us trace the Spirit's ways with him under the authoritative guidance of the apostle.

First, let us mark that the spirituality of the law is spoken of as found in what we may call a common Christian consciousness. In other words, it is the instinctive consciousness of every regenerate soul. The measure of its spirituality is another matter. This, no doubt, differs in different individuals. But every new-born soul will unhesitatingly confess the spirituality of the law. With this common Christian instinct the Spirit allies Himself; hence the one who has mistakenly taken up the law as a rule of life is led to realize that by his carnality he is a captive in sin's power. He consents to the law, agrees with the Spirit that it is good, in mind and heart is subject to the Spirit's view of the law as being spiritual, yet he finds inward insubjection as well.

Second, as, under the Spirit's watchful eye and superintending care, he studies the conflict going on within himself, he is taught to distinguish between himself and the sin that dwells in him. He is unwillingly serving sin. He sees there is an "I" that is right though he has not yet learned to identify it. He does not yet see himself as a man in Christ, but he distinguishes the "I" that is right from the

sin dwelling within him, and to which he is captive.

Third, further exercise and introspection, still by the sure guidance of the Spirit, teaches him the utter profitlessness of the flesh. The carnal mind, or the mind of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God. There is no power in the law to make it subject. He sees there is a will to do the good — a will that is not the will of the flesh — but power to do the good he does not find. His previous conviction and conclusion is thus confirmed, and in fact greatly strengthened. While he does not yet see himself to be a man in Christ, he is more than ever confirmed in the conviction that there is an I that is right, from which the indwelling sin is to be distinguished.

We come now to the final conclusions to which the Spirit leads him (Romans 7:21-23). All the exercises the Spirit has been pressing upon him, and all the experiences he has passed through in connection with the exercises, reveal plainly an ever-present law: however desirous of doing the good, evil is always present with him. It is a fixed, established law. While he delights in the law of God, approves God's expressed will, he sees there is an opposing law in his members, not only antagonistic to the law of his renewed mind, but with sufficient power to make him a helpless captive to the law of sin dwelling in his members. Thus by the guidance of the Spirit, who characterizes his true condition before God as a subject of divine grace, he has learned to place a right estimate upon his practical condition in not enjoying the aims and purposes with which the Spirit has energized him. He has not yet learned what the Spirit's power is, but he has become assured that it is a mistake to look for it in himself. He is now ready to abandon his search for it by introspection. He turns thus away from himself to find in another the power for holiness and fruitfulness that he has thus far been looking for in himself in vain.

We will now inquire, Where did he find the Spirit's power? How did he find it? When he found it, what did he find it to be? All these questions are answered for us in verses of Romans 7:24-25, Romans 8:1-4. Let us look at them.

Having learned to realize his wretchedness as a helpless captive to the power of indwelling sin, he turns away from himself to think of and enjoy Christ — the Christ that died and rose again, with whom he is connected as being a subject of grace. Occupied now with Him, he sees himself as in Him — as belonging to Him, as being of Him. This, that he now sees, has been true of him all through. It has been the mind of the Spirit as to him all along. But the discovery fills his soul with praise. Convicted of needing a deliverer, he finds the need fully met in the One to whom he has turned, and his soul responds, "I thank God!" Through Jesus Christ he has been delivered from his captivity, and the joy of it fills him.

## 01.08 Romans 8

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### Romans 8:1-39

Now as a delivered one he looks back with spiritual intelligence — the intelligence of the Spirit — upon the terrible struggles through which he has passed. He understands that, as serving the law of God with the mind, and the law of sin with the flesh, he had been entirely mistaken as to his real condition before God. He did not have the mind of the Spirit about it. He now understands that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ: that God views them as being of the risen One, and thus as sharing in the favor and acceptability in which He stands before God.

If now (having learned to look at himself as belonging to the risen and accepted Man) he rejoices in being delivered from the bitter conflict he had been maintaining, what is it that has effected the deliverance? If it is the truth that sets free, what truth is it which sets free from the struggle we have been considering? Plainly, according to the apostle, it is learning this precious truth that, as being of Christ, he is under the operation of the law of life, which operates by and in Christ. Knowing, as he now does, that this is the law with which the Spirit identifies Himself, he understands that, according to the mind of the Spirit, he is no longer a subject of the law of sin and death.

Furthermore, he now sees that sin in the flesh has already been fully condemned of God in the death of Christ; that God therefore is not requiring fruit from the flesh; that the righteous thing required by the law, instead of being produced by the flesh as he has hitherto supposed, is produced in him by Christ with whom now he is occupied. Walking according to the Spirit is holiness and fruitfulness.

Thus we see that all the victims of sin whose hearts have been laid hold of by the grace that comes in through Jesus Christ, belong to the risen Christ. They are of Him — are sharers in the nature and character of His risen life. They belong to the position into which He has entered as risen from the dead. As being thus of Him they are entitled to be practically free from the power of indwelling sin; but to really enjoy this practical freedom from sin's power, they need to learn the impossibility of doing so by walking according to law; that holiness and fruitfulness are found in the enjoyment of the mind of the Spirit. Walking thus according to the Spirit in the enjoyment of the risen Christ is practical liberty.

Having described the walk of a Christian, not exactly after the flesh, but according to the power of law, the apostle now goes on to describe his walk according to the power of the Spirit. No believer, even though he be but the merest babe in Christ, is after the flesh. One who is after the flesh is in the condition and position of the fallen first man. He is under sin and death — an unregenerate man whose heart has not been laid hold of by the grace which has come through Jesus Christ. He minds only the things of the flesh.

One who has been a victim of sin and death, but whose heart has come under the grace that is by Jesus Christ, has a renewed heart and mind. He belongs to the risen Christ, is of Him, and is no

longer in the position of the fallen first man, but in the position of the risen Christ. Being in this position he is also in the condition that attaches to it, i.e., he is "in the Spirit" — a condition in which he characteristically minds the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5).

Now these two conditions are essentially different. The mind of the flesh is death. The mind of the Spirit is life and peace. A condition of death on the one hand, and a condition of life and peace on the other — two contrasted and widely differing conditions, which cannot commingle. The mind of the flesh being in its nature and essence enmity against God is intrinsically antagonistic to the expressed will of God. Law will not subject it to God. Hence it is impossible for those who are of Adam to please God. The walk according to the flesh is not suitable to Him (Romans 8:6-8).

Plainly, then, all efforts on the part of those who are in Christ to improve or regulate the flesh are misdirected and contrary to the mind of the Spirit. This we have seen in our consideration of Romans 7:1-25. We saw there a renewed man, ignorant of his true condition according to the Spirit, endeavoring by the power of law to subject the mind of the flesh to God. It was a vain and useless effort, for if we are not in the flesh (not in that condition) why seek to improve or better a condition we are not in? What a great deliverance it is to be set free from such a profitless conflict! But those who are in Christ — those whose hearts the grace that is by Him has laid hold of, are not in the flesh. They belong to the risen Man — the new Head and Fountain of life and blessing. They are of Him, and the Spirit of God dwelling in them is the divine acknowledgment of it. He characterizes the condition of all those in whom He dwells. That He dwells in all believers John 7:39; Galatians 4:4-6, and Ephesians 1:13, rightly translated, plainly declare. The children of faith, even the babes among them, are justified, are children of Abraham, are Christ's. Even if we should read, as it is by some claimed we should read, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him" instead of "none of His," the truth remains the same. The force of "not of Him" or of "none of His," must be determined by the doctrine taught in Romans 5:12-21. Those who have derived life and nature from the fallen Adam are of him, they belong to him and share with him in the consequences of his disobedience. On the other hand, those who have derived life and nature from the risen Christ belong to Him, are of Him and share with Him in the consequences of His one obedience. He is the Head of the family, of the race, and all who belong to Him are of Him, and thus are sharers with Him in the position in which He is as risen; they are the sons among whom He is the First-born. Being thus sons they are given the Spirit. The indwelling Spirit is connected with being of Him — not with deliverance from sin's power. Hence all who are in Him are in the Spirit. All His race are in Him. They are all in the Spirit. Being in the Spirit they are not in the flesh (Romans 8:9). But as yet we have the old mortal body. This is our present participation in the sin that came in through Adam. The body being mortal cannot be the power by which we manifest the life of Christ. It is not able to express our vital connection with Him. The Spirit indwelling us is the power for this. Righteousness having come in, having been maintained, or accomplished, the Spirit can now righteously dwell in our bodies, and doing so He effects in us the display of the life and nature of Christ. Nothing else but the effect of His activities in us is life according to the thought of God (Romans 8:10). But the Spirit that dwells in us, in our mortal bodies, is the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead. In taking up His abode in our mortal bodies He has thus claimed them for Christ. He is the witness of God's title to quicken them. We see thus that even the mortal body itself is delivered from the claims of death. If the Lord tarry it will die, but not as being under the claims of death. If the believer dies it is as being "put to sleep by Jesus," not as

under the penalty of sin. The indwelling Spirit then is the proof of Christ's absolute and complete title to our mortal body itself. It is in His right to deliver it from the sin that dwells in it by applying the power of life to it, by quickening it, by changing it into an immortal body (Romans 8:11). This makes it clear how we can look for the Lord to come for us before we die. If He had not title to quicken our body with immortal life, death would be our inevitable lot before we ever could be with Him. But the mortal body of the believer belongs to Christ. He can do what He wills with His own. If He so wills it, it is His right to leave us here in the mortal body. If He wills it, He may with perfect right "put us to sleep," i.e., take the spirit to be with Himself while the body goes to corruption. But whenever He wills to do it, it is in His right to change our body, and quicken it into an immortal body.

If now the very mortal body itself is no longer under the claim of death, but subject to the claim of Christ, then in no sense are we debtors to the flesh to live according to it (Romans 8:12). The natural relationships which God has formed for man on earth are of course to be owned and walked in, but the believer is under no obligation to the sinful lusts which have their seat in the mortal body. The mere natural man, whether under law or not, lives according to the flesh. He is led by the fleshly passions and lusts. He is on the road to death as the penalty of sin (Romans 8:13). But those who live through Christ, participating in His life as risen from the dead, are characteristically Spirit-led men. Through the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body. The measure of it is doubtless never perfect in any one of us, but, with whatever defects, mortifying the deeds of the body is characteristically true of all those who are of Christ. They are in the way of life. They are already participators in eternal life. Being thus Spirit-led men, they are sons of God (Romans 8:14). Man, the natural and fallen man, has lost his place as a son with God. The children of grace and faith are now put in the position of sons; but their sonship is the concomitant of their connection with the risen Christ; it is therefore a position of greater exaltation and dignity than the one that has been forfeited by sin. The sons of God of Old Testament times (Genesis 6:2) had the spirit of bondage and fear. The full truth had not then come; the full measure of grace had not been given. Necessarily, therefore, they were all their life-time subject to bondage through fear of death. But now the sons of God have the Spirit of adoption, characterizing the position in which they are. In the power of that Spirit the cry, Abba, Father, is in their hearts (Romans 8:15). Here again the measure is never perfect, even in the hearts of those with whom the sense of it is deepest, but it is a cry characteristic of every one whose heart the grace of Christ has laid hold of. By the Spirit it is instinctively in the renewed soul. The renewed spirit instinctively turns to the One from whom a new life has been derived. With this renewed spirit, the Spirit of God allies Himself. He joins His own testimony to that of the intelligent part of the renewed man. The twofold witness is one — the one testimony confirming the other. Thus the fact of being in a relationship with God, that of a child with a Father, is fully certified to (Romans 8:16). Our own spirits agree in declaring it. The subjects of the grace of the Cross are children of God. The race of the risen Christ have God for their Father. But if those who are participators with Christ in His risen life are the children of God, then they are heirs — and what heirs! Heirs of God — possessors with Him of what He possesses, all things ours! But it is through Christ that we have come into this wonderful inheritance. It is as being joint-heirs with Him it is all ours. We have no claim upon it. We are absolutely without title to it save as He holds the title to it for us. But if we are joint-heirs with Him, then we share with Him the sufferings of the time of His patience, so that our glorification will also be a joint-glorification with Him (Romans 8:17). But if the present time is a time of suffering, of

patience and endurance, we seriously err if we think of the sufferings as deserving comparison with the glory that is to be revealed to us in its own suited time (Romans 8:18). The former are temporal; the latter is eternal. But, beside this, creation itself is not yet in its final and permanent condition. The manifestation of the sons of God will bring about a great change for it. By the will of God it was not given its permanent, abiding condition. It was subjected to change and decay, to vanity. But this condition was not intended to be permanent and final. So there is before it the prospect, not only of a measure of relief from its present groanings and travail-pains, when the sons of God shall be manifested, but of full and permanent deliverance at the end, when all things will be made anew to abide forever. It is to have finally the liberty from corruption that will characterize the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:19-21).

If creation, now in a state of decay, in earnest hope looks for a final and permanent deliverance from it, how much more must we who are of the race of the risen Christ, already possessing the Spirit (the pledge and foretaste of new creation), be in earnest longing for the glorious change that awaits us, the redemption of our bodies. It is this that will complete our salvation. How we long for it! (Romans 8:21-25)

Meanwhile, as we wait for the consummation of our hope, how incapable we are of measuring our present dependence. But here we realize the great value of the indwelling Spirit. He joins His help to our infirmity. Whatever sense of need there is in our souls it has been produced by the Spirit. But our sense of need is never in the full measure of the Spirit's sense of it. Hence in expressing our need to God we never do it as we ought; we always come short of the measure of the Spirit. But it is He who is working in us, and He is at work according to God. In our inability to lay hold of His full measure, so far as His mind is concerned, there is a longing with Him that is never fully expressed by us, though what we do express is by His power (Romans 8:26). But the God who searches our hearts knows perfectly the mind of the Spirit — what He is working in us. Our imperfect, defective utterances go up to Him, reach His ear; and, inadequate as they are as expressions of what the Spirit means, He gives them all the value of His own mind (Romans 8:27).

Romans 8:28-39 are a triumph-shout which the apostle puts into the mouths of the subjects of the grace of the Cross. All things are absolutely in the hands of Him who has purposed the glory of the Man Christ Jesus, in whom He has called the joint-heirs. Nothing whatever can defeat that purpose. He has seen the end from the beginning, and determined all the steps by which to reach that end. Everything must necessarily be subservient to the eternal purpose, and work for the blessing of those marked out for participation in the image of the glorious Firstborn.

God is manifestly for (working in behalf of) the subjects of His grace. If there is nothing that is not under His mighty hand — the hand displayed in the resurrection of Christ — then there is nothing that can be against those who are of Him who died for them and is risen again. The love that spared Him not, but delivered Him to judgment and death for us, triumphs in His glorious resurrection, proclaiming the impossibility of anything being charged against the elect of God. It is God Himself who justifies, and there is none to override His judicial decrees.

He whom God has raised up from the dead as justifying those believing on Him, sits now on the very throne of God itself as Intercessor — a continuous Intercessor for the objects of His love, who live through and in Him. His ceaseless intercession is in the same love in which He assumed their judgment and death. Nothing can possibly separate them from that love which even judgment and

death could not overcome — the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How complete and glorious is the victory of the Cross! What boastings for those who are altogether the debtors of grace — the grace of Christ! How these boastings glorify Him who loved us and gave Himself for us!

## 01.09 Romans 9

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Romans 9:1-33 In Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36 the apostle answers an objection which an unconverted Jew would naturally make to Christianity as it has been unfolded in the previous chapters. He would say that Israel, the descendants of Abraham, were the God-chosen nation entrusted with this testimony, and to whom the promises were made. He would claim that God had put into their hands the covenants and the promises, as well as the law. He would argue that Christianity, as the apostle has expounded it, nullifies all this, and makes the word of God to be without effect. In answering this objection the apostle shows that he knows how to appreciate the force of it as it would be felt by an unconverted Jew who was imprecating Christ. In his own unconverted days he had done the same. He had justified the murder of the Son of God by the Jews. Their solemn declaration, "His blood be on us, and on our children," he had made his own. He had thus "wished himself accursed from the Christ." But now, since He had been revealed to him, and he was prostrate at His feet, there was constant heaviness and sorrow in his heart on the behalf of his brethren according to the flesh. This he affirms in the most solemn way. He is declaring the truth in Christ. He is not lying, as they thought (Romans 9:1-5).

Having thus assured his kinsmen after the flesh of his deep concern for them, and of his ability to understand their objection to Christianity, he goes on to show from the Old Testament Scriptures that Christianity in no way nullifies the word of God to Israel.

First, he appeals to the case of Isaac to show that the children according to the flesh are not the children of God. Isaac was not the seed of Abraham on the mere ground of the flesh, which Ishmael might also claim; but on the ground of promise it was that Isaac was reckoned to be Abraham's seed. The apostle thus clearly shows that not all who are of Israel are truly Israel. Those merely children of Abraham after the flesh are not counted to be his children in reality — not connected with faith and the promise to faith (Romans 9:6-9).

Furthermore, the case of Jacob and Esau illustrates still further the same truth. If Isaac was made the seed of Abraham by the word of God, it was the same also with Jacob. He had his place by grace — sovereign grace. It was the purpose and election of God, not works of flesh, that made Jacob the object of favor that he was. It was a calling and election of which God did not repent, as Malachi 1:2-3 sufficiently shows — written as it was after 1600 years of sin and failure on the part of Jacob's descendants. Plainly the election and calling was not founded on any foreseen goodness in Jacob as a man in the flesh. During all these years God had not transferred His favor from Jacob to Esau, though many might judge Esau to have been the better man. But God clearly had acted in His sovereign right in the purpose He had formed for Jacob, and in the call He had given him (Romans 9:10-13).

Jacob then, like Isaac, was a child of promise. It might be thought this choice of Jacob instead of Esau looks like unrighteousness. This the apostle strongly refuses, and justifies his refusal of it on the ground that in the case of the guilt of Israel in the matter of the golden calf God claimed it to be His right to show mercy to whomsoever He willed to do so (Exodus 33:19). From this the apostle

deduces the general principle that mercy is not of the will or work of man, but of God, as having the sovereign right to show it. He also appeals to the case of Pharaoh, to whom God said that He had set him up as the head of Egypt for the express purpose of displaying His power in connection with him, so as to make Jehovah's name known throughout all the earth. Mercy and hardening, then, are both in the sovereignty of God (Romans 9:14-18).

If now it be objected that if God shows mercy where He wills, and where He wills He hardens, He cannot rightly censure men, the apostle rebukes it as arrogance. Men should remember that it is unseemly to argue with God. Furthermore, it is His right of the same lump of fallen, sinful humanity to make one a vessel to honor, and another a vessel to dishonor. It is His sovereign prerogative to find delight in the part of the lump that submits to His grace, and to be displeased with the part that resists it. Those who reject the Ideal after which His grace would form them are surely vessels quite fit for judgment. God's long-suffering and patience with them make this manifest. On the other hand, those who yield to the formative power of His grace are suited vessels to display the riches of His glory; and this, too, whether such vessels are found among Jews or Gentiles. That such are to be found among the Gentiles the quotations from Hosea 2:23 and Hosea 1:10 fully show (Romans 9:19-26).

Now Isaiah 10:22-23 and Isaiah 1:9 show the two kinds of vessels formed from the same lump of sinful, disobedient Israel: on the one hand, a remnant submissive to grace; on the other, a vast body of them resisting grace, and cut off in judgment (Romans 9:27-29).

It is then to be concluded that the Old Testament Scriptures are not in any way nullified by the grace of Christianity which includes Gentiles among the subjects of its blessings. It is in accordance with their predictions that Gentiles who followed not after righteousness have attained to it by faith; while Israel, seeking it by works, and not by faith, has not obtained it. A new beginning in Christ was a stumbling-stone and rock of offence. He came in in grace, but they would not yield themselves to be formed by it. They would not call upon Him. They have stumbled to their great confusion (Romans 9:30-33).

## 01.10 Romans 10

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### Romans 10:1-21

Nevertheless the apostle earnestly desired salvation for them. He owned they had a zeal for God, but yet it was not according to knowledge — the knowledge of the written Word. Did they know that rightly, they would understand how righteous God is. It is because of their ignorance of this that they are seeking to establish a righteousness of their own; but in doing so they are not submitting to a righteousness provided in grace by God. They are in the darkness of unbelief; for, for believers, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; Christ being received, He is to the believer all that the law can claim (Romans 10:1-4). The apostle now turns to explain the difference between the righteousness which is of law and the righteousness that is by faith. The righteousness of the law consists in doing the things it requires. This the law affirms repeatedly, as every reader of the Old Testament Scriptures should know. Now, to show the character of the righteousness which is of faith, he appeals to Deuteronomy 30:12-14. In this chapter Moses is informing Israel that after they have fallen under the curse of the law their only hope will be in the grace of God, who will no longer put them on the ground of their obedience as the way of life and blessing, but will circumcise their hearts to love the Lord (Romans 10:6). This answers to the prophet's word in Jeremiah 31:31-33, where Israel is told that God will in grace establish them under a new covenant — a covenant of a very different character from that of the old legal one. The principle of the new covenant will be faith, not works. Therefore, instead of doing, in order to have God's law in the heart, it will be having the law in the heart by grace, the doing it being the result. Consequently, when Israel from the heart calls upon the name of the Lord, she will be saved. She will then stand before God in a righteousness not her own, but given her of God — a righteousness which is of faith.

Having thus shown by appealing to Moses the character of the righteousness which is by faith, the apostle now informs the Jew that this is what he is preaching; and if he objects that it should only be preached to the Jew, he shows that the prophets expressly apply it universally: their oft-repeated "whosoever believeth" opens the door of the gospel to the Gentiles (Romans 10:5-13).

Therefore, if the prophets contemplate the gospel going out to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, it is those who are resisting its world-wide proclamation that are nullifying the word of God. Hearing, whether in a Jew or a Gentile, comes by faith; and faith in the heart is by the power of the word of God. It is by preaching the Word that God reaches the heart. Necessarily then there must be messengers of the Word, and those who seek to carry the message of God's grace to the Gentiles can justify themselves in doing so by abundant Old Testament scriptures (Romans 10:14-17).

Furthermore, Israel is fully without excuse for resisting Christianity, because, while on the one hand her own Scriptures anticipate it, on the other hand she has been faithfully warned, by Moses himself too, that God would provoke her to jealousy by them that are no people; and Isaiah very

boldly declares the turning of the Gentiles to God, and finding Him, while Israel is still a disobedient and gainsaying people (Romans 10:18-21).

## 01.11 Romans 11

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### Romans 11:1-36

If then Christianity does not nullify the word of God, Israel's present rejection is only temporary — not final. As witness of this, the apostle appeals to his own case. He was an Israelite, yet God had shown him mercy. He was one of a remnant — an election of grace in a day of apostasy, such as God reserved to Himself in the days of Ahab (Romans 11:1-6). As to the rest, they are in the blindness of their unbelief. Of this present state of unbelief, in the great mass of the nation, their own prophets have sufficiently foretold. But if they have thus been given over to blindness, under God's judicial dealings with them, it is by no means to be the final state of the nation. While they are in this state, God is provoking them to jealousy by the privileges He is conferring on Gentiles. From this the apostle argues that as Israel's stumbling and temporary setting aside from the place of privilege was the occasion of blessing going out among the Gentiles, the recovery of Israel, and her restoration to the position she has temporarily lost, will be the occasion, not merely of widespread blessing among the Gentiles, but of the recovery of the world. The bringing of the world back in allegiance to God waits on the restoration of Israel. As being specially an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul would particularly appeal to this, being desirous of stirring up in his brethren after the flesh the spirit of jealousy (Romans 11:7-15).

Abraham was called of God to occupy a special place of privilege and responsibility among the nations of the earth, already then swamped in idolatry. Israel had been identified with this place of privilege and responsibility, but the unbelieving part of it has been separated from it. Since their rejection of Christ and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, come as His witness, only the believing remnant among them have continued on in the special place of privilege and responsibility. But Gentiles have been brought in to occupy that place along with them. The Gentiles, however, are warned by the apostle not to be high-minded. They must remember the place of privilege into which they have been brought is also one of responsibility, and their continuing in the place depends on their meeting the responsibilities of it. The unbelieving part of Israel had been cut off for this very thing — because of their continued failure to meet its responsibilities. In like manner also would the Gentiles be cut off if they failed as Israel had done. How needed the warning! Alas, how unheeded! (Romans 11:16-21). In Israel's case the goodness and severity of God had been illustrated; the believing remnant realizing His goodness, the unbelieving part of the nation experiencing His severity. The same result will be seen at the close of the Gentile period of their time of testimony. Israel was cut off for unbelief. The Gentiles apostatizing in like manner will also be cut off. But the same grace that introduced Gentiles into the place of privilege when Israel was cut off will also restore Israel to the place from which she fell, when from the heart she turns to the Lord. Her blindness is only in part, for a time, while the fulness of the Gentiles is being gathered in. In a day now fast approaching there is to be a remnant in Zion to whom the Lord will appear, and then from Zion He will come forth in the character of Israel's Deliverer, turning ungodliness away from Jacob, in accordance with the new covenant that is yet to be made with Israel. Thus it is clear that as regards the gospel the Jews are now enemies, i.e., regarded so by God for the sake of the

Gentiles; nevertheless, as regards the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes (Romans 11:22-29). The Gentiles were once disobedient, but God has shown mercy to them on account of the disobedience of Israel. Likewise Israel has disobeyed God's present mercy to the Gentiles, that in their restoration they themselves may become objects of mercy. Gentiles and Jews alike are shut up in unbelief, so that mercy may be shown to them both. In thus reviewing the dispensational ways of God, how manifest becomes the wisdom of God! Every heart that enters into this mercy of God surely joins with the apostle in saying, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and for Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:30-36).

## 01.12 Romans 12

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### Romans 12:1-21

Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, Romans 14:1-23, Romans 15:1-33, Romans 16:1-27 are exhortations. The recipients of the mercies of God are told what ways should characterize them. We have seen that the apostle regards the body as being dead. It is in no way capable of displaying the life of Christ; the power for that is in the Spirit that indwells it. We need then to place it at His disposal, to yield it to God. His mercies, of which we are the subjects, impel us to deliberately surrender ourselves — our bodies — to His will. Our practical lives are thus, and only thus, acceptable to God — a sacrifice rich in the fragrance of Christ. The life of Christ is produced in us by the power of the Spirit (Romans 12:1). But this means non-conformity to the life of the world which is astray from God, and at enmity with Him. It is ours to pass through it with minds laid hold of by what is found only where the risen Christ is. Living in the practical realization of association with Him where He is, is to prove the blessedness of the will of God (Romans 12:2). The Christian's practical life becomes thus a life of service. Self-seeking is no expression of the life of Him who humbled Himself and was meek and lowly. We are therefore warned against it. We are reminded of the nature and closeness of the tie by which we are bound to one another — a tie that makes us dependent on one another. Whatever the line in which the Spirit of God exercises us, and in which He leads us out, it is not for self-exaltation, but for the profit of others. The spirit of service then befits us. We should accept our gifts as being grace to us, and in humbleness of mind use them for the benefit of those whom love so urgently prompts us to serve. The spirit of service will find its justification in the need of the objects of love. Let each one then serve as prompted by love in the measure in which he finds he has capacity for it (Romans 12:3-8). The remainder of the chapter shows us the holy ways of the spirit of service — the ways in which love, which is the spring of service, manifests itself. Those who have derived such immeasurable blessing from the grace of Christ are here exhorted to see to it that they walk in these beautiful ways of love. It is not necessary here to enlarge on them singly, or even to enumerate them. We need to remind ourselves, however, that the actual attainment of a walk characterized by these things is not, and cannot be, the fruit of legal effort. It is by the power that is in the renewed mind that such a transformation is effected. It is alone by putting God at the helm, to be our governing power, that we can walk in ways that display such characteristics as are here declared.

## 01.13 Romans 13

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### Romans 13:1-14

If, as we have seen, Romans 12:1-21 gives us the character to which divine grace transforms us, in Romans 13:1-14 we find what characterizes our relations to the world through which we are passing. If we have the practical character of which we have been speaking, though we are yet in the world, evidently we cannot be of it. We are of heaven; we belong to the new creation. Here is where we find our new origin and citizenship. This separates us completely from the old creation. This takes us entirely outside of the course of this world. But that does not empower us to regulate the world or reform its ways. We are reminded that God has authorized the governments of the world, and are exhorted to be in subjection to them. We are to see in them a divine institution, and leave those charged with the exercise of government to their responsibility to God, to be dealt with by Him who will call them to give account as to their use of the power which He has put in their hands. The Christian, then, needs to be in subjection to the governments under which God has placed him. He is to show due respect to their agents, honoring them as servants of God (Romans 13:1-7). But subjection to governments does not mean that Christians should be under obligation to them. In fact they should not be indebted to any one. As having found their resource in God, they should be dispensers of blessing. Themselves indebted to the love of God, they should regard themselves as under the obligation of showing love to all. In doing this they are fulfilling what the law required. It demanded love, but man in the flesh is without power to meet the demand. The Spirit dwells in the Christian. With Him there is power to produce what the law required. The requirement of the law is carried out in the Christian through the power of the Spirit without his being under law either for righteousness or as a rule of life.

What a wonderful thing this! The very fulness of the law — what was sought after by those under it, but not attained unto — through the power of the Spirit is produced in the Christian, in the measure in which the power of the Spirit is realized and depended on. How little this is understood! In how many is the measure extremely scant! (Romans 13:8-10). May it be much enlarged in us all. The Christian belongs to the day that is coming, which in fact is at hand. It is fast drawing near. It is nearer now than when we believed. The Christian is not of the night; but passing through the darkness, the power of the day to which he belongs should be manifested, not the power of the night. Walking here in the sense of the light of the coming day he is armored against all the temptations of the night. He needs to be awake, to be in the sense of the light — in the practical enjoyment of the things of the coming day. Let us be diligent, then, in casting off the works of darkness! May we be sincere and wholehearted in putting on the Lord Jesus. Let there be such a sense in our souls of His claim to the exclusive use of our bodies that we shall be kept from providing for the sinful lusts of the flesh (Romans 13:11-14).

## 01.14 Romans 14-15.7

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Romans 14:1-23, Romans 15:1-7 In Romans 14:1-23; Romans 15:1-7 the apostle unfolds the principles which are to regulate our dealings one with another. There are three general principles. The first is the supreme authority of the Lord. The right to command is in His hands, not ours. He is the only dictator of the conduct of His people. His way of ruling His people is by the conscience. Each one needs to be individually before Him. It is a most serious thing to interfere even in the slightest way with the conscience of another. It is damaging to the soul to hinder one from being in his own conscience before the Lord. No one can make his own conscience the rule for another.

We must remember, of course, the apostle is not here raising any question about doctrine. He is not speaking of the faith. We are not at liberty to believe what we like. A faith has been revealed and committed to us. If question arises as to truth or doctrine, revelation is the only appeal. But this is not what is under consideration here. It is a question of practical conduct that is occupying the apostle now. How am I to act towards a brother whose conscience, as truly before the Lord as my own, does not permit him to do the things I feel myself free to do? Is it my conscience that is to govern him or his own? Am I to decide his doubts for him?

Here we need to remember that we each have our predilections, our prejudices, our tastes, our likes and dislikes. In these things we are accountable to the Lord surely, but we are not each other's master. These are things in which one is not the judge for another. We should receive one another without regard to them (Romans 14:1-12). The second principle governing our conduct towards one another is love. Love will not find its pleasure in censuring, nor will it delight in causing a brother to offend or fall. Where true love is operating, no brother who thinks a thing to be wrong will be forced to do it. If he thinks it is sinful, to him it is sinful; and to force him to do it is to crush his conscience. To despise the conscience of another is not to walk in love toward him. One may indeed be within the limits of what is perfectly right, and as to which his own conscience is free and clear, yet be liable to have his good considered evil. As the servant of Christ he is not to think of what he may consider his rights, but of the benefit and blessing of his brother. Love will seek peace and edification for its objects (Romans 14:13-23).

## 01.15 Romans 15:8-33

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Romans 15:8-33 A third principle is the glory of God. We should diligently seek this in all our dealings with one another. What simply pleases ourselves may not be to His glory. It is to His glory to seek to profit our brother. The weaker he is, the more needful it is to be considerate of him — the more necessary to think of what will prove best for him. The example of Christ is appealed to: He pleased not Himself, but endured and suffered even the reproaches of those who reproached God. Let us be like-minded with Him, tender towards one another, considerate of one another's weaknesses, ready to bear another's infirmity. We shall glorify God in so doing.

Romans 15:8-33 is the apostle's vindication of his boldness in writing as he has to the saints at Rome. In the first place he appeals to the fact that the Old Testament, while marking out the Jewish Messiah as the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm, or establish, the promises made to the fathers, at the same time distinctly declares that the Gentiles would glorify God for His mercy through Him. He draws on both Psalms and Prophets to show this. Naturally, therefore, he encourages Gentile believers to lay firm hold on the hope the gospel has brought to them, and to be filled with joy and peace in doing so.

While thus exhorting and encouraging them he declares his confidence in them and in their ability to admonish one another. At the same time it was his special privilege and right, as called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, to put them in mind of the claims upon their hearts of the blessing it was his to minister to them. For him it all was a happy priestly service, in which believers from among the Gentiles, laid hold of by the power of the Spirit, were an acceptable offering to God. Thus the apostle glories in the power by which he had been sustained to fully preach Christ in those extensive regions through which he had journeyed. His work had been abundantly manifested as authorized by God. Throughout he had acted in accordance with what is written in the prophet, "To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand."

It was the faithful carrying out of this service that had so long stood in the way of his going to Rome; but now that he had fully covered the field which had been thus far the sphere of his labors, moved by the same principle which had hitherto governed him, he was thinking of Spain. He saw in his journey there his opportunity to see the saints at Rome whom he had so long desired to visit. But before undertaking the carrying out of his purpose, he felt the need of the saints at Jerusalem had a claim upon him. He was going there to deliver to them the offerings of the Macedonian and Achaian saints. Having performed that service, his purpose was to immediately set off for Spain. He was anticipating a season of refreshment among the saints of Rome, confident that in coming to them it would be "in the fulness of the blessing of Christ." Nevertheless he realized the dangers to which he exposed himself in going to Jerusalem, and thus implored the earnest prayers of the Roman saints. He desired them specially to beseech God for his deliverance from the disobedient, the favorable reception of his ministry, and the privilege of making his long-purposed visit to them.

## 01.16 Romans 16

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### Romans 16:1-27

Romans 16:1-27 needs little comment. It is touching to notice the delicacy with which the apostle makes mention of one and another. How quick love is to notice and single out what deserves approbation in the service of saints. There is also a warning against the makers of division. Such are to be turned away from, characterized as they are by self-seeking and pretentious speech. He rejoiced in the obedience of the saints. He desired them to be wise in what is good, and not to be dwelling on evil.

He closes with the salutations of Timothy and others, wishing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with them.

## 02.00 Readings on the First Epistle of John

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Readings on the First Epistle of John

C Crain.

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## 02.00i \*Introductory

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\*Introductory In taking up the study of the first epistle of John, a comparison of John's ministry with that of Peter and Paul will be helpful. The words addressed to Peter in John 21:18-19 imply that in some sense his ministry was to have a character similar to that of the Lord Jesus. Is the implication supported by Scripture elsewhere? If so, in what sense was Peter's ministry similar to the ministry of Jesus Christ?

Light is shed on these questions in Romans 15:8 and Galatians 2:7-8. In the former passage Jesus Christ is called a "minister of the circumcision," the evident meaning being that His ministry was in connection with the people in the covenant of circumcision — that made with hands. In the latter passage there is mention of "the gospel of the circumcision" as having been committed to Peter. The thought evidently is that a gospel specially addressed to the circumcision was committed to Peter. Peter is also spoken of as having the "apostleship of the circumcision." Undoubtedly the intention is to show that Peter exercised apostleship in connection with the circumcision. In this sense, then, Peter's ministry was similar to that of Jesus Christ. But while this marks out the people for whom his ministry is intended, it does not define its theme and character, which are to be inquired into. If we refer again to Romans 15:8 we shall find it stated there that "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy." This needs to be carefully considered. In the Old Testament we learn about these promises to the fathers. It is plain we have a record there of a ministry of promises. Indeed there was a period which we may consider as specially characterized by the ministry of promises. From the call of Abram until Jacob's going down into Egypt, at least, God was making or ministering promises. For my present purpose I do not need to notice these promises in detail. I will merely cite the passages where they are found: Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 13:14-17; Genesis 15:1-21; Genesis 17:1-22; Genesis 22:15-18; Genesis 26:2-5; Genesis 26:24; Genesis 28:10-15; Genesis 35:9-12; Genesis 46:2-4. All these promises are absolute, made in the sovereignty of grace, and are entirely unconditional. It should be remembered that none of them are addressed to the Gentiles. God gave them no promises, no covenant (Ephesians 2:12). It is true the Gentiles are contemplated in the promises, but the promises were not ministered to them. They were ministered to the fathers of the nation of Israel (Romans 9:4).

Now while God ministered these promises to the fathers, the heads of Israel, the fulfilment of them was not yet to be. They heard them and believed them, but, if they were persuaded of them and embraced them, they saw them only as to be fulfilled in a time to them "afar off" (Hebrews 11:13). They died in faith, leaving these unfulfilled promises as a legacy to their children. But God put their descendants on a different footing altogether. Promises and covenants He made to them also, but they were conditional, not absolute. The reason for this was the need of raising — not alone for their sake, but for all men — the question of man's ability to establish a righteousness on which to claim what had been promised. Under the Mosaic law the children of Israel were on the ground of responsibility. They took the responsibility of working out a righteousness they could call their own,

by which a title to the things promised would be established, and which God Himself would necessarily recognize. But God not only would signalize by circumcision (as He had done and was still doing) the unprofitableness of the flesh, but He would practically demonstrate it. He would prove man's inability to claim as his own anything but his sins, and thus that he is shut up to sovereign grace, exercised on the principle of faith — not of works. The trial was a long one, thus perfectly fair and conclusive. But while this question, raised by putting Israel under the law, was being worked out, to show how utterly void of righteousness man is in himself, the fulfilment of the sovereign, unconditional promises made to the fathers had necessarily to be delayed. The question raised had to be definitely answered once for all; and the lesson of the law now abides. But on the ground of responsibility Israel lost the promises. If Israel was unable to establish a title to them, there is surely no power to recover them. No pleading of descent from Abraham could avail, no taking refuge under being circumcised could secure the forfeited promises (Matthew 3:9). Israel's only hope then is the sovereign grace of God.

Having demonstrated that Israel is in irretrievable ruin, having lost the promises beyond all hope of recovery, God then sent forth His Son, not only made of woman, but made also under the law (Galatians 4:4). This was God acting in the sovereignty of His mercy. It was raising up in Israel an Israelite in whom the promises were yea and amen. It was providing One who could establish a title to them. Jesus Christ was thus in their midst as maintaining the truth of God — His word. His promises. He was one of their fold — a minister connected with the circumcision, in behalf of the promises made to the fathers, to secure their establishment.

Having Himself a personal claim on them, He had also title to remove what was a hindrance to their fulfilment. He had a right to end the Mosaic dispensation and bring in the dispensation of the fulfilment of the promises. He had title to take the curse of the law, and thus be the end of the law as a way of getting righteousness for all who believe (Romans 10:4). He had the right to be Israel's Substitute to sacrificially endure the judgment of their sins, and thus open the channel in which the grace of God could flow, in which God could in righteousness bestow the forgiveness of sins and fulfil the promises made to the fathers.

But, although Christ did thus establish or secure the promises, Israel continued in blindness and unbelief; therefore it became necessary to continue the dispensation of confirming the promises. It became necessary to appeal to facts in evidence that the promises have been permanently secured. It is this appeal that characterizes the ministry of Peter. Like Christ, he was connected with the circumcision. Like Christ, he was a minister in behalf of the truth of God: he announced to Israel the security of the promises and their permanent establishment. Like Christ, Peter had a ministry which was specifically addressed to the circumcision — to Israel as a nation. The careful student of Peter's ministry as recorded in Acts 2:1-47, Acts 3:1-26, Acts 4:1-37, Acts 5:1-42, will readily see that his very first address to the Jews begins with a declaration that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the powers accompanying it are a beginning of the fulfilment of promise (Acts 2:16). When he says, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," he does not mean that Joel's prophecy has had its complete fulfilment, but that what has occurred is of the nature and character of what was promised in Joel. It is fulfilment beginning. This announcement made by Peter means that the hindrance to fulfilment of promise has been removed. and the fulfilment has begun.

Next, in Acts 2:22-36, he appeals to the resurrection of Jesus and His exaltation on high by the power of God as evidence that God has acknowledged His rights. This acknowledgment is conclusive proof that Israel must look to Him for the fulfilment of her promises. Accordingly, in Acts 2:38, the nation is invited to submit to the One they have rejected, but whom God has made Lord and Christ, in order to receive the promise of the forgiveness of sins; and in Acts 2:39, Peter encourages them to do so, by assuring them that the promise of forgiveness of sins has been made to them. He tells them plainly that if they will receive the forgiveness of sins in this way, i.e., by submitting to Christ, they will also participate in the promise that accompanies forgiveness — the Holy Spirit.

Again, in Acts 3:19, still addressing himself to the nation as such, Peter tells them the promised blotting out of their sins and "times of refreshing" are waiting on their repentance.

It is thus very clear that the ministry in which Peter addresses himself specifically to Israel partakes of the nature and character of our Lord's ministry in which He appealed to them. In both cases it was a ministry in behalf of the truth of God — a ministry of the security and establishment of the promises made to the fathers. But Peter's ministry was rejected as that of Christ had been. The Israel of his day was a nation "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," as their fathers had been (Acts 7:51). Individuals submitted to Christ and became recipients of a blessing that was according to promise, but the nation in blindness and unbelief refused their blessings.

Peter had another ministry also, the character of which we shall now consider.

If Christ had a ministry in which He addressed Himself to the Jewish nation as such, He had also a ministry in which He specifically addressed Himself to the true children of God in the midst of it. In John 10:1-42 He speaks of thus ministering to the true sheep of the Jewish fold. Peter was given a ministry of like nature — a ministry specially intended for the real believer among the circumcised. In John 21:15-17 our Lord commissions Peter to shepherd and feed His lambs and sheep. The Lord knew what the lambs and sheep among the circumcision would need. He knew what persecutions they would have to endure. He knew the stiff-neckedness, the unbelief, the blindness of the rulers and leaders of the nation, and that they would forbid teaching and preaching in His name. Accordingly He provided for the need of His true sheep. He knew they would need the most considerate nourishing, the tenderest care and oversight, diligent strengthening and constant encouraging.

Carefully and effectually training Peter for this special service to the objects of His tender interest and love, He puts them into Peter's care — He entrusts them to him. Hence a special ministry is given to Peter. If he was to have a ministry in which he would address himself to the nation as such, so also was he to have a special ministry in which he would address himself specifically to the believers in the midst of the nation.

If in the earlier chapters of the book of Acts we have the record of that ministry carried out by Peter, in which the nation of Israel as such is addressed, the two epistles of Peter carry out a special ministry to the persecuted and dispersed disciples — the followers of the despised and rejected Messiah. Of course, in speaking of Peter's ministry in his epistles as especially intended for converted Jews, I do not wish to be understood as meaning that it has no application to a wider circle. It certainly applies to all Christians, but its primary application is to believers connected with

Israel wherever they have been scattered (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1).

I do not need here to consider this ministry in detail. It will be sufficient to characterize it as a ministry in which the government of God is explained: in the first epistle, as being the Father's discipline of His children; and, in the second, in its bearings upon the world. The first epistle shows that the governmental ways of God are pregnant with inestimable blessing for the children; the second shows their issue for the world in a sweeping judgment after long-suffering and patient waiting for it to repent. In the second epistle Peter says he writes as anticipating soon to put off his tabernacle. Writing thus that what he had ministered to them may abide in power in their minds, he completes or fills out the service with which his Lord had entrusted him, in commending to them the ministry of Paul (2 Peter 3:15-16).

John's written ministry was then not begun, but Paul's was practically, if not entirely, finished. Before turning to John's ministry I will seek to characterize that of Paul.

I will notice that Paul also had a double ministry: one towards the world — the nations — all men; the other, towards the body of Christ, the Church (Colossians 1:23-24). In either case it was a ministry of the grace of God — a dispensing of blessings from God, whether to believers individually or collectively. A word of explanation is perhaps necessary here. In the Old Testament times promises were made, but the blessings implied in the promises were not dispensed. When our Lord was on earth He did dispense certain blessings to individuals where He found faith. He did minister the forgiveness of sins, for instance, to individuals who believed; but He did not minister the full blessing that goes with the fulfilment of the promise of forgiveness; nor did He, in the days of His flesh, give the Holy Spirit. In connection with the ministry of Peter there was both the ministration of the forgiveness of sins and of the Holy Spirit; yet Peter did not minister the fulness of blessing which is the present portion and possession of faith. In God's wisdom, this was reserved for Paul. The full range of faith's blessings, so far as they are now bestowed, is through the ministry of Paul. We have also in Paul's ministry the blessings that are in hope — that is, what will yet be done for us and given to us as completing the blessings which redemption has acquired for us.

What we find in Paul's ministry, then, is the entire sphere of blessing in which God displays His wondrous grace. Paul thus occupies as with what, in a true sense, we may speak of as outward or external — not unreal, far from it; it is a most real display of the grace of God. But we now turn to John's ministry. Its leading feature is that it occupies us with God Himself — with what He is in Himself. It is what is intrinsic, essential, underived and eternal. It is the life of God — the eternal life that was ever with the Father. In his Gospel, John's ministry relates to the manifestation of God in His Son become Man. His life on earth is viewed as a declaration of what God is — His nature, character, and life, displayed on earth as testimony to men — the features and characteristics of His unchangeable nature, not only proclaimed, but shown, exhibited. In the epistles the life that is eternally in the Son and has been manifested among men in its eternal, unchanging nature, is viewed as a communication, and the ways in which it displays itself in those to whom it has been communicated are unfolded. In the book of the Revelation John writes of the ways of the Eternal — He who is the First and the Last, the living One, though He died — in bringing all things into accord with His own eternal nature. The distinctive features of the ministries of Peter, of Paul, and of John, are distinct and plain. They are in no way in opposition, but perfectly harmonious, each in

agreement with the others, none to be pitted against the others. They are not to be compared as if one was paramount to the others. There should be no depreciation of Peter's ministry as if it were defective — not equally perfect with that of Paul or of John. There is a tendency, perhaps naturally in us all, to give a prominence to the blessings ministered by Paul which overshadows the Blessor Himself. It was this tendency that was in the mind of one whose memory we all rightly cherish, when he counselled us not to neglect John in pressing Paul. He did not mean by this advice that John is a balance to Paul, but that the apprehension and enjoyment of John's ministry will be a cure to our proneness of being occupied with the range of our blessings in such a way as to have them more distinctly before our souls than the One who has blessed us.

It is the Blessor Himself with whom John occupies us. What He is — what He is essentially, intrinsically, eternally. What He is in essence, in nature, in character: this is what John shows us.

Beloved brethren, what would all the range of our blessings be without God Himself? It certainly ought not to need much consideration to realize that the Blessor is greater than the blessings. The Giver is higher than His gifts. Our God and Father is higher, greater than all His hand bestows. The Son of God who came from God and the Father to give us the knowledge of Himself is above the benefits He has procured and secured for us, inestimable as all these are; and we need the sense of this in our souls to keep us from glorifying ourselves on account of the great blessings that have been given us. The ministry of John serves to maintain us in this very needful apprehension. The links of the epistles of John with his Gospel are very close; so close, that an apprehension of the doctrine of the Gospel as to eternal life is essential to a right understanding of the epistles. Before we enter on our detailed study of John's first epistle, therefore, let us as briefly as possible outline the teaching of his Gospel as to life — the life eternal.

First, the teaching of John's Gospel is that life — essential, underived, unchangeable and eternal — dwells in the Son of God. In Him who was with God as the eternal, divine Word, was life (1 John 1:4). Living in divine community of life, He was personally the absolute expression of what God is, in essence, nature and character. He, in whom the life thus essentially dwelt, was the light — the truth — the Source of it to man. It is important to remark here that none of the living creatures created by Him had community of life and light with Him. Those that became living beings by the word of His power, cease to be also by the same Word. Man became a living being, not by the word of His power, but by an impartation, not of the divine, eternal life, but of the spirit-nature; so that as being by creation a living soul having spirit, a spirit-nature, he was in the image and likeness of God. But if man thus lives and moves and has his being in God by creation (Acts 17:28), that is not living in community with the divine eternal life of God — the life that is in the Son of God. Even if man had not sinned, a special work of God in his soul would have been necessary for him to possess life in community with God, to have become a participator in the divine, the eternal life. But man sinned, and his mind became darkened. Sin alienated him from God and rendered him incapable of finding out God, or of understanding Him, or of discerning and receiving the things of God. Hence, from the garden of Eden to the present time, men have not apprehended the life and light dwelling in the Son of God. Whether it be the partial manifestations since Eden, or the full shining forth of the light in Himself become a Man and tabernacling among men, the light of eternal life in Him has not been perceived by man naturally.

Nay, more: the Gospel of John tells us when the Son of God was upon earth the testimony given of God to Him was rejected. There was adequate testimony — of John the Baptist, of the works wrought by the Son, of the Father's testimony and seal of the Holy Spirit; that of the Old Testament Scriptures also, and of the Son Himself — yet the world does not recognize Him; even His own earthly nation does not receive Him (John 1:1.) Man's mind is darkness, under the power of unbelief.

It is true that from Eden until now individuals have received Him, have discerned His personal and divine glory, have waited for Him, have welcomed Him, have bowed the knee to Him; but these, according to John's Gospel, have all been subjects of a work of God in the soul. They have been born of God by faith; they have been laid hold of by the testimony of God in the power of the Spirit (John 1:1-13). They have been born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). But until the Son came into the world, in full revelation of the Father, such were not given the privilege of taking, in the full reality of it, their place as children with the Father. That could not be until the place and the work to fit us for that place were fully revealed, and while, as we learn elsewhere, the children were being treated as servants. But the place of the children is now made known by the Son sent by the Father, and the right of the children to take it is divinely authorized (John 1:12). Even while our Lord was on earth He granted to faith this privilege, as John's Gospel abundantly shows (John 8:19; John 12:44-45; John 14:7-9). In chapter 3 the universal need of new birth is pressed (John 3:3-7). Everywhere, even in Israel, there was necessity that the testimony of God should lay hold of the soul in the power of the Spirit. This is needed no less in order to share in the earthly things of the kingdom of God than in the heavenly; both alike are subjects of divine revelation and testimony. The Lord was but insisting on a need the Old Testament Scriptures affirmed. The refusal to submit to this necessity is as fatal in connection with the earthly things as it is in connection with the heavenly. The Lord is not teaching that new birth is an earthly thing, but that it is essential to participating in either the earthly or heavenly things of the kingdom of God. But how can new birth, giving that new life and nature which constitutes those upon whom it is conferred children of God, be bestowed upon sinners? The Cross is the answer. The basis on which God ever gave life — life eternal — is the sacrificial death of the Son of Man. The Son of God became Man to die under man's penalty, that life might righteously, though in grace, be communicated to those deserving the death eternal. So earnestly does God desire men to live in the life that is eternal, and not abide in eternal death, that He gave His own Son, to become Son of Man to provide a righteous basis for the communication of divine, eternal life (John 3:14-16). The one that believes on Him, the object of divine testimony, receives the life — the eternal life that is in the Son; the rejector of Him does not see life, but abides in death and under the wrath of God (John 3:36). This statement is absolute truth — true for all ages and dispensations, those preceding the Cross as well as since. Believers before the Cross believed on the Object of divine testimony. Such and only such were then born of God; and it is such and only such that are born of God now. The measure of revelation and testimony has nothing to do with the matter of the communication of life. It is not at all the amount of revelation laid hold of; it is the laying hold of the Object of revelation and testimony. Wherever and whenever the object of divine testimony is laid hold of in the power of the Spirit, there is a child of God — one born of water and the Spirit; there is one to whom the life eternal, that is in the Son of God, is imparted. In John 4:1-54 the imparted life is shown to be a spring of refreshment and satisfaction within the one to whom it is given. The possessor of this "spring" is independent of the world through which he is passing, since the spring

within him rises up to the sphere of the abiding and eternal realities. Linked with these by the life and nature bestowed on him, he has capacity for their enjoyment; the measure of the enjoyment being, of course, according to the measure of the revelation and the energy of faith in the apprehension of it.

John 5:1-47 insists that the eternal life that dwelt underivatively in the Son of the Father before the world began, dwells underivatively also in Him as the Son become Man; that thus He has the sovereign and divine right to be both the Life-giver and the Judge; and further, that His communication of life, divine and eternal, absolutely frees those that receive it from judgment; they pass out of death into life. It is eternal life they have passed into. Resurrection to life is thus guaranteed to all who have died in faith, from whatever age or dispensation.

John 6:1-71 shows the Giver of life — the Quickener — to be also the abiding Bread of life, its sustainment, its nourishment. The life develops and expands as it feeds on Him. This explains the various degrees of growth in the divine life found among the children of God. If the life by which we live is a common life — the life that is in the Son of God — the practical, experimental life, the life lived, varies in the different dispensations on account of the varying measures of the revelation, and in the same dispensation also on account of the varying degrees of the energy of faith.

We are instructed in John 7:1-51 that it is through drinking of the fulness that is in the Son that the possessor of life eternal becomes a filled vessel, the overflow of which the Spirit uses to bless and refresh others. He who drinks in the things of Christ as the Spirit has taught them, is in turn the Spirit's channel of these things to others.

John 8:1-59, John 9:1-41, John 10:1-42 show that the portion of those whom He quickens — those born of water and the Spirit — is communion with Himself. Life in the Son of God, communicated to the believer, implies communion with the Son, after the pattern of the communion of the Son with the Father (John 10:14-15). This communion in its full blessedness necessarily waited its full revelation. Those having life before the full revelation enjoyed communion in a partial measure, but after its full revelation, the communion is life abundant — fulness of joy. In John 11:1-57, John 12:1-50 we are shown that the life with which we are quickened in new birth, given as it is by Him who in His own person is the annulment of death and judgment, and on the basis of His own death and resurrection as grace for men, is a life that links its possessors with the sphere of life beyond death. Hence the certainty of the resurrection of all dying in faith in Old Testament times, while death is no more death for the believer in this New Testament age. Its power is annulled for those for whom life and incorruption have been illuminated (2 Timothy 1:10). The quickened from the beginning are all the fruit of the Corn of Wheat that fell into the ground and died. It has risen. He is the manifested Living One, and all that receive life from Him, of whatever age, are by that life forever linked with Him in the sphere of life to which He belongs. The Son of God, then, is the Source and Fountain of life. He is that as a divine Person; He is that as become Man. It is His right to give life, to quicken. Divine testimony deposited in the soul in the power of the Spirit is His way of imparting life, and life imparted thus is of the same nature as life in its Giver. It is life in identification with the life eternal in the Son. It is a divinely bestowed capacity for the knowledge and enjoyment of God. It is that in every age; the measure of the knowledge and enjoyment depending on the measure of the revelation; the full revelation expanding the enjoyment into fulness of joy — life abundant. The above statement of the doctrine of life, as taught in the Gospel

of John, is very brief — too brief if we were engaged in the study of that Gospel; but it may suffice as presenting what needs to be kept in mind while studying the first epistle. As we proceed with the epistle in course, there will be frequent need of referring to the Gospel. The Gospel record is for the purpose of showing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that they who believe the record may have life through His name (John 20:31), for life is communicated on the principle of faith. This life, being a derived, dependent life in those to whom it is communicated, has those characteristics seen in the earthly life of the Son of God. This is what the first epistle insists on. He that says "he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."

We will now take up the epistle in detail.

## 02.01 1Jn\_1:1-4.

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1 John 1:1-4. The apostle Paul tells us that God dwells in light — unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16). He is the invisible God (Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:27). No man has ever seen Him. It is not possible for man to see God in His essential Godhead. Man's constitution makes him able to see only what is within the range of his vision — not the invisible.

Even angels, who by creation are nearer to God than man, have not seen and cannot see that essential glory of God in which He is alone, and which is known only by the three persons in the one Godhead. The apostle Paul tells us that angels are dependent on God coming out of the unapproachable light in which He dwells to display "the riches of His grace" and His "manifold wisdom" to acquire the knowledge of them (Ephesians 2:7; Ephesians 3:10). Surely, if they have not this knowledge instinctively, and can only have it through a revelation of it, a display of it, then certainly they do not know the fathomless depths of the being of God — what He is in Godhead essence — what He alone is and cannot share with another.

God, dwelling in the unapproachable light, is Father, Son and Holy Spirit; a community of essence, a community of moral nature and character, a community of life both in principle and continuous activity — a community of fellowship peculiar to themselves, known only to themselves and enjoyed only by themselves; and that jointly and co-equally. It is an eternal fellowship, abiding, unchangeably the same from everlasting to everlasting, an eternally mutual and reciprocal fellowship.

It is evident that the purpose to reveal Himself was ever in the mind of God. He designed ways of displaying Himself. This, however, needs to be guarded. God never planned to reveal His Godhead essence. In this He is, and must forever be alone. He cannot communicate His Godhead essence to any other. If this could be, He would cease to be absolutely God alone; but created beings can never become uncreated, self-existing ones, whether they be men or angels.

What then was His purpose? It was to make known His moral nature and character and the blessedness — the happiness — of the life He lives. It was as to this that He designed to bring others into community with Himself — a community not of being, but of moral nature and of life. To do this, to carry out this purpose, it was necessary for Him to come out from the unapproachable light in which He dwells alone. This He did when He came forth in the exercise of the creatorial power inherent in Himself. In the creation which He has produced He has clothed Himself "with light as with a garment" (Psalms 104:2). But God looked at in the light of creation is not seen in His moral nature and life. Creation manifests "His eternal power and divinity" (Romans 1:20, Greek). It proclaims the power and divinity that was eternally in Him, but not what He is in moral nature and character and their continuous activity.

God comes out of the light in which He dwells to exercise His providential care over His creatures. He cares for every sparrow. It has but little value in the eyes of men, but not one falls to the ground without His notice. He does not forget one of them (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6). He "maketh His

sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). He opens His hand, the desire of every living thing is satisfied (Psalms 145:16). The least need of the least of His creatures is provided for, and the supply is superabundant. But if, on the one hand, God witnesses to Himself in giving by sun and rain and other forces "fruitful seasons," filling men's "hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17); on the other hand, by "sweeping rain" (Proverbs 28:3) and the burning heat of the sun, He destroys the food of both man and beast (James 1:11).

If we look at God in the light of His providential care for His creatures, we find mysteries that that care does not solve. Questions arise that it does not answer. We look there in vain for the revelation of God's moral nature and character, and the manifestation of the life He lives.

If we turn to His governmental ways with men, both with individuals and nations, as publicly exercised, we fail to learn our lesson if we do not realize that we are studying ways that proclaim the sovereign Ruler of the universe to be in a pre-eminent sense a moral Being. His moral nature is plainly manifested in His moral government, but how inscrutable are these ways! How past finding out (Romans 11:33)! To our finite minds there are contradictions which seem irreconcilable. The mystery of it is to us impenetrable. He acts sovereignly, does His own will, and "giveth not account of any of His matters" (Job 33:13). We wonder at His silence when evil insolently lifts up its head. We tremble in the presence of His punishments of it. We see Him putting limits to the operation of evil, and ask, Why then does He permit it at all? If, on the one hand, God "doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35); and, on the other hand, tolerates sin, allows it to go on unrebuked, at times seems to be indifferent to it and exposes Himself to the charge of seeming acquiescence in it; where is the line of demarcation between His abhorrence and His sufferance of it?

Looking at God in the light of His moral government, we reach certain conclusions as to His moral nature and character, and up to a certain point our conclusions are correct, but beyond that point there is felt to be a need of fuller light. The same is true also with regard to God's special government of His own people. Any observer of the governmental ways of God with His own children, both individually and collectively, will readily see that He warns them against disobedience, threatens them with penalties, and in case of disobedience often visits them with severe punishments. On the other hand there is often apparent indulgence. There is indeed patience, long-suffering with their manners, and what seems like indifference. We see here, too, God exposing Himself to implications which upright souls feel cannot be true of Him; yet the mystery of it is not explained until God is seen in a fuller light.

God came forth from the unapproachable light to make known His law — His demands on man, what He requires of him as standing on his own responsibility; but He did not manifest Himself. He surrounded Himself with "a thick cloud" (Exodus 19:9). He spoke out of "fire and smoke" (Exodus 19:18) and "thick darkness" (Deuteronomy 4:11). There was a display of majesty, power and authority. So great was the tempest and the quaking of the mount that the people trembled, and Moses himself feared exceedingly (Hebrews 12:21). Even on the occasion of the second giving of the law, though not accompanied with such terrible manifestations, there was still reserve and distance. When Moses requested to see the glory of God, his request was not granted. He was

told, "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). The revelation then given was not of the "face" of God, but His "back parts" (Exodus 33:23). It was not the Light in the full power of its shining, manifesting God in the fulness of what He is in moral nature and life, but a ray of the Light, partially revealing the One from whom it was reflected.

God came out of the light in which He dwells directly after Adam's disobedience and fall. He came out to reveal to him the coming of a Man to triumph over Satan and bring life out of death (Genesis 3:15); but, though the revelation was a promise of eternal life (Titus 1:2), the life and incorruption of the promise was not illuminated till the giving of another revelation long after (2 Timothy 1:10). By types, by the shadows of the sacrificial system connected with the law, by specially appointed events — events happening by divine intervention and under divine control, God came out of the unapproachable light to give forth rays of what dwells in Himself. These rays, either singly or combined, while telling us something of the character of God, were in no wise a full and adequate revelation of what He is. It was a true revelation, so far, but not the full truth.

God came out of His dwelling-place in light in the promises He made to the fathers. These promises were a revelation to faith of her inheritance and portion; yet the revelation was incomplete. The promises, however truly implying what was in God's mind, did not in reality express it all. If the "God of glory" (Acts 7:2) appeared to Abraham, He did not show Abraham all His glory. So also in prophecy, God came forth out of the light in which He dwells, speaking by the mouth of men who were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). None of the prophets, however, could say: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen" (John 3:11). Only He who came from God could thus speak. The prophets spoke as and when moved by the Spirit, and thus only what was given them to say. Their utterances therefore were always in measure, fragmentary and partial, not the full revelation of the God they served. Old Testament prophecy does not adequately and fully declare what God is. However much it does tell us of Him, it does not make Him known to us in the fulness of His moral nature and life. In the various ways in which I have thus far spoken of God (as coming out of the light in which He dwells to display before men some distinct and special characteristic of Himself), He remained still the invisible God. In none of them had He yet placed Himself in conditions in which He could be seen; but in the incarnation He has done so. There we see "God manifest in flesh." The incarnation is a profound mystery. The mind of man cannot explain it or understand how it was effected, but the fact is plainly evident. The power of the Holy Spirit in and through the virgin produced a Man who is both a divine and a human Person. Thus supernaturally come into the world, He unites Deity and humanity in Himself — in one Person. He is thus truly God and truly Man: with human spirit, soul and body — God is seen in flesh. The incarnation of the Son of God then was a stooping from "the form of God" (Php 2:6), the condition of essential Deity to the condition of humanity — a coming down into the condition of human and creature dependence. In this human condition He is not only "the Firstborn of all creation" (the One who has the first and highest rank in it), but also the image, the representation of God (Colossians 1:15). Come thus from the unapproachable light, from the bosom of the Father, to be the image of God among men, He has declared the God whom no man has seen nor can see (John 1:18). So far as knowledge of God is communicable He has fully communicated it. He has fully expressed and exhibited it.

Here I may mention the competency of the Son of God become Man to witness to God and declare what He is — to reveal Him to man. Being Himself a divine person, one of the dwellers in

the unapproachable light, He knows God in a divine way, with absolute knowledge in the essence of His being; He knows what His moral nature and character are; He could, and did say, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen" (John 3:11). "What He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth," was said of Him by the Spirit through John the Baptist (John 3:32); and Himself said, that He did the works and spoke the words He knew in the Godhead intimacies (John 8:26; John 8:38; John 12:49).

Existing eternally as one of the Godhead, when He came down into our dependent creature-place He brought with Him the eternal intimacies in which He was with the Father and the Spirit, and possessed them and lived in them here. As living in them from everlasting, He was fully competent to declare and reveal them here.

While tabernacling among men, He was the Light of the world (John 8:12; John 9:5). He was not, as some others, a light merely; He was the Light. Every prophet was a light, some brighter than others. John the Baptist "was a burning and a shining light" (John 5:35). But all these were mere lights — were fallible men, though under the power of the Holy Spirit for the light they gave (2 Peter 1:21); but Christ was in His own person the Light — God in humanity manifesting Himself.

What light in which to see God! God Himself come out of the unapproachable light, in the person of His own Son, to be seen, heard, studied, and even handled by men! What light in which to see the invisible God, had men eyes to see! Alas, they had not. They were in the darkness, and, blinded by it, they could only think of Him as a blasphemer — He the incarnate Son of God! (John 10:33). But what wondrous revelations of God were to be seen in Him! What illumination of those partial revelations in the Old Testament! The promised woman's Seed, the Man from the Lord had come — Abraham's Seed and heir — David's Son and Lord — the foreordained Lamb of God, to whom the oft-repeated sacrifices of the Old Testament ages all pointed — the One of whom the prophets all had spoken, and the psalmists in Israel had sung and prophesied. But how could I enumerate, much less unfold, all the revealed glories of the incarnate Son, as the light of men (John 1:4)? There are some, however, which need special mention as having to do with what is before us in our studies of this epistle.

First is the revelation of the Godhead relationships of Father and Son. I have already mentioned the fact that God who dwells in the unapproachable light is made known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit — three Persons in the one Godhead — a Trinity in unity, a community of essence in life, nature and character. In the Old Testament, Elohim (the Hebrew word for God) is in plural form, implying at least three, and is constantly used as the subject of singular verbs, suggesting plurality in unity.

It may be of interest to some to mention that in Isaiah 48:16 we have the three persons of the Godhead spoken of: "The Lord God and His Spirit hath sent Me." This trinity in unity is thus clearly indicated in the Old Testament, though not in the terms of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But He is thus made known to us in the New Testament, by one of the persons of the Godhead coming forth from that unapproachable light, stooping down from the form of God to the form of a servant, tabernacling among men, a veritable Man and Son of God, uniting Deity and humanity in one Person. When this Visitor from heaven was baptized by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended and abode upon Him (John 1:32), and a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17). Thus God is revealed to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit — relationships

which were not revealed and therefore not understood before. Our Lord, however, constantly speaks of "the Father" and addressed Him as "My Father." He speaks of Him as One who has already been declared as the Father (see Matthew 11:25-26; Mark 13:32; Luke 9:26; John 4:23; John 5:20, and many other places). In His life upon earth the Son of God was for men a revelation of the life and character of God. In Him was life (John 1:4). As the Father has life in Himself — a life uncreated and eternal — thus also has the Son life in Himself (John 5:26). He was personally the Life eternal that was with the Father (1 John 1:2). Had it not been in Him as in the Father, it would not have been said "with the Father." It was a community of life, therefore, in the persons of the Godhead. So also as regards the activities of the life. It surely is impossible for us to measure the infinite fulness of the joys that filled the divine Persons' bosom as they mutually and reciprocally participated in constant fellowship of eternal activities. There are many scriptures implying this, but none perhaps that helps us more to appreciate this fact than Proverbs 8:30-31 : "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men." If we apply this (as undoubtedly we may) to the Second Person of the Godhead, as being the personification of the wisdom of God, then we have expressed here the eternal happiness of God in the activities of divine life. What mutual intimacies! How deep the outflow of love responding to love! What a community of enjoyment; what fellowship of the Father and the Son in these eternal, divine activities! And when the Son of God became Man, He did not cease to have life in Himself. The same underived, eternal and divine life that was in Him as dwelling eternally with the Father was in Him in humanity. He was the only Man to whom it was given to have life in Himself. In the first man, Adam, God breathed the breath of life, and he became a living soul. This was a creature-life — not the divine, eternal life. But the human life assumed by the Second Man was produced by the power of the Spirit in the virgin. Thus in Him were the divine and human life united in one Person, a unique Person, a unique Man: "The Word was made flesh." Life was essentially in Him upon earth as in the Father (John 5:26).

If the Son of God become man united in His own person divine and human life, humanity in Him was a new humanity — in community of life with God. The Son of the Father become man was a Man possessing life in community with the Father. But if He thus raised up humanity into community of life with God, it is also true that He brought divine life down into a condition of human life. The life He had with the Father eternally was thus possessed in the human condition He assumed. For Him to assume the conditions and limitations of human life, meant living dependently and obediently. This of course was an entirely new experience for Him, and for which it was necessary He should come into the condition of it (Hebrews 5:8). He could not experience creature dependence and obedience while in Godhead form and condition. To have that experience He needed to stoop down to the form and condition of man — of dependence and service. To this He stooped, assuming a condition in which He lived dependently and obediently. He lived "by the Father" (John 6:5; John 6:7), i.e., the living Father was the reason or ground of His life here below. But, living thus, there was no interruption of the divine and eternal intimacies as the eternal Son with the eternal Father in the unapproachable light.

Living here among men dependently and obediently, yet as possessing and enjoying the intimacies of Godhead community of life, He was the revelation of them for men. If men had had eyes to see it they would have seen in Him not only the One who was personally the life with the

Father, but also the activities of the life which habitually and constantly expressed itself in Him, both in word and work. (See John 3:11; John 3:32; John 5:19-20; John 5:36; John 8:26; John 10:15; John 10:32; John 11:44-45.) There never was a moment, save in the darkness of the cross, when the divine, eternal intimacies were interrupted: the Father finding in His Son, become man, His eternal delight; and the Man Jesus Christ, the Son of God, realizing His eternal rejoicing. His earthly life was a manifestation of the life of the divine Dwellers in light brought down into the condition of a dependent human life. The true Life thus was shining, was manifested in its own proper activities; but men, blinded by the darkness they were in, had not eyes to see it. There had been rays of the light shining from the beginning of fallen man's history, but only in the Son of God become man and living here in the world did the light shine in its full power. It was shining for every man (John 1:9), but they hated the light thus manifested.

Still, through grace, there were those whose eyes were opened and who did see. From the garden of Eden, down the long history, there were those who saw and received the light so far as it was shining. So, too, when the Son of God was among men as the Light of men, there were those who through grace, saw it, welcomed it, received it — received of its fulness, grace upon grace (John 1:16). They saw in the One who was made flesh, a divine Person; for, as they contemplated His glory, they saw it was the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father.

I have said this was through grace; for it was by the power of the Spirit that divine testimony laid hold of those who thus set to their seal that God's testimony concerning His Son become man is true (John 3:33). They thus became children of light and of God, through faith, receiving Him who had come from God. It was by believing on His name they were born of God — born of water and the Spirit. It was by believing on His name they were born from above, that is, from a higher sphere than the natural. Of course, it was ever by faith that men, from Eden down, became children of God; but, though born of God, they were not granted the privilege of taking their place with God as children. They could not take the place of children until that place was made known; nor could they know the blessedness of the place until it was revealed. Hence, until the Son of God came into the world and revealed the children's place and its blessedness, the children of God died in faith, without full knowledge of their place with God. But the Son of God having come, the place was made known and the intimacies of it communicated. To His children, the Father's name was made known (John 17:6; John 17:8).

It was thus they became competent witnesses of the life eternal that was with the Father and was manifested here. They were qualified to witness by their personal enjoyment of the manifested life, and testified to what they experienced of it (1 John 1:1). So far as they enjoyed the word of life they have declared it. What they saw, they have testified to (1 John 1:2). Their testimony is an announcement of the life eternal which was with the Father, but manifested to them here in the Son. Not only have they given us the testimony of the Son of God Himself — the testimony He bore as being the true Light of men — but they have reported what was their own enjoyed portion as those to whom He manifested the Father's name.

What this wondrous, blessed portion was, we shall consider directly, but I wish to emphasize the fact that John, as one of these qualified witnesses, representing and speaking for them, has authoritatively declared (John 21:24) what the testimony of the Son of God to the world was, and also His communications to the men given Him out of the world. In his Gospel he writes to all men,

declaring the things that Jesus did and said to bring conviction "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," that by believing they might have life through His name (John 20:31). In the epistle he writes to those to whom the Son has manifested the Father's name, unfolding the characteristics of the Life eternally with the Father, that they may not merely have the life, but have it as inwardly understood (1 John 5:13), as subjectively realizing what its character is, and what its accompanying blessedness. Of this privilege, bestowed upon the children of God of this present period, we shall speak in the proper place. My object now is to fasten attention on the fact that John, as the divinely-chosen witness, has testified to the children of God, as being himself in the realized enjoyment of it, the character of the life of which by faith they have become participants. What he saw and heard, what he thus inwardly knew, what he enjoyed of the manifested life, he has reported to us. In their day these witnesses testified orally; by divine inspiration their testimony was put into permanent form to be handed down. We of this 20th century have their personal testimony of the life of our Lord upon earth. Through the divine testimony and power of the Spirit they saw His glory; they believed Him to be the Son of God; and what they saw and heard, they testified to.

Now, in John 17:20-21, our Lord prayed for those who should receive the testimony of these witnesses, that they might be participators in this divine community of life with the Father and the Son: "That they also may be one in us" (the Father and the Son), i.e., should share in their community of life and nature. It is in this light we must understand what the apostle says when we read: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Through faith in Him they had come into the community of life of the Father and the Son.

I speak of course of the fact, not of the measure of their apprehension and enjoyment. But, as is said, their fellowship was truly with the Father and the Son. It was a fellowship of life and nature — in divine community — and those who believe through their word share with them in it: "That ye may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," affirms this. The apostle is speaking of the fact. The measure of its enjoyment is another matter. Whatever be the measure in which we are enjoying it, the fact is and abides, and we know it by divine revelation. The Son has come and manifested its nature and character, and believers now are made acquainted with the fact of their participation in what has been manifested.

Here I must pause to consider some questions that have been raised and variously answered. Some think the possession of this blessed privilege, this participation in the divine community of life, is the result or consequence of attainment, of reaching a certain stage of intelligence, of believing some testimony beyond what is received when new birth is effected in the soul. But it is the one who believes on the Son that possesses the life eternal (John 3:36). As an unbeliever, instead of being a sharer in the life, he is under the wrath of God. This is a state of death out of which he passes through faith. By faith he is born into the divine community of life. He must first be in the life before he can make attainments in it. In Leviticus 1:1-17 we learn that the one who brought turtledoves or young pigeons for a burnt-offering was accepted as fully as the one who brought a bullock. The one of the feeblest apprehension as well as the one of the greatest is made accepted in the Beloved. So with the life received in new birth; it puts one into this community of divine life with the Father and the Son.

Another question has also been raised. It has been asked, "Did the Old Testament saints have fellowship with the Father and the Son?" I reply, As regards the fact, they did; but as regards the knowledge of it — since it had not been revealed to them — they could not know that they were partakers in the divine community of life. Unquestionably, however, as born from above by the power of the Spirit, they were in reality partakers of the divine nature — had eternal life. In Old Testament times God did not give His children the place and privileges of children; consequently He did not reveal to them the true nature and character of their relationship to Him. They were truly His children, but He did not tell them they were. They in fact were possessors of His life, of His moral nature and character, but He did not reveal it to them. They could not have understood it if He had told them. To understand what divine, eternal life is, it had to be manifested. The Son has come and manifested the life, and along with its manifestation comes also the revelation that God's children are sharers in it. As born of the Spirit they have eternal life, and are in community of life with the Father and the Son. This explains the difference between the Old Testament saints and us as regards eternal life. God not having revealed it to them, they knew not that they had it. We have it, and know it, because God has declared it to us. In saying we know it, I remind the reader again that I am not speaking of the measure of our enjoyment of it. This is, as already said, a different matter, and is not the Spirit's subject in verse 3. If any should say that I am overlooking, or that I am forgetting the practical side, I answer that I am simply reserving its consideration till we come to those parts of our epistle where it is treated of; but here the Spirit's thought is that of our participation in the divine community of life.

There is another question I must not overlook. We are sometimes told that fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ is the only fellowship Scripture ever speaks of, and thus it is taken to mean Church fellowship. This is a serious mistake. It is true there is no real participation in Church fellowship unless there is participation in the fellowship of the Father and the Son. To be a sharer in the ecclesiastical community or unity really (not merely professedly), one must be a sharer in the community of the divine life; but they are different things. This should be evident from the fact that there are those who share in the latter that do not share in the former. The children of God of both the Old Testament and millennial times participate in the divine community of life, but do not in the Church community. For Church fellowship, whether ideal or practical, we must turn to those scriptures where it is spoken of; but we do not find it here. Here, the apostle speaks of the life that is common with the Father and the Son. The incarnate Son has life in community with the Father (John 5:26). Those who receive the divine testimony are brought into that community of life. The apostles and others in their day participated in it, and all those who receive their testimony share in it now, through infinite grace.

What unspeakable blessing! How little are we in the practical enjoyment of it! How amazing the grace that has made such a rich portion ours! We, who have forfeited even merely human life, being laid hold of by this life from above, are raised up, not merely out of the death and the judgment due to our sins, but to oneness in life and nature with God! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!" A word of caution here may perhaps be needed by some. We are not brought into oneness of essence with the Father and the Son. To say that, would be serious error; in fact, blasphemous. We do not become what God is in the essence of His Being. To be "children of God" does not mean or imply that. The unity into which by grace we are brought is not a unity of essence, but of life and nature.

We are not made participators in His Being and attributes, but in His moral nature and character. Fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ is not community of being, but of life.

We briefly notice 1 John 1:4. If faith comes by hearing and hearing by a report, and the believer is thus brought into community of divine life, the unfolding of the nature and character of the life thus participated in makes the joy complete. By inspiration of the Spirit the apostle thus authoritatively unfolded the blessing which divine testimony brings to believers to make their joy complete. The saints of old had joy surely, but their joy could not have been complete under the then conditions and circumstances. But now, the true nature and character of the relationship in which the children of God stand to Him having been made known, how much the joy has been enlarged. Our joy, as compared with theirs, as measured by theirs, is fulness of joy. It is not that we are better than they; it is not that we are more worthy than they, but in the wisdom of God the time has come for the children of God to take practically the place of children. And to this end our revelation is immensely larger than was theirs. The revelation given to us, beside revealing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, also reveals the fact that the children are in community of life with them, and that this blessedness is ours.

What richer, fuller joy can there be? What is there beyond and above God? We now know Him, His moral nature, His character, His life, and we are made partakers of them! This is fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

## 02.02 1Jn\_1:5-10.

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1 John 1:5-10. In 1 John 1:5, the apostle who had been a witness of the earthly life of the Son of God gives us the message which, by word and work, He had communicated to them, making God known to them in His nature and character as Light, without a shade of darkness. No doubt John gave our Lord's message orally to those to whom he could thus speak, but here he puts it in permanent form that it may be the heritage of all believers. If, then, we have received the message concerning the moral nature and character of God, it becomes us to seek to realize the import of the message.

We may best do this perhaps by considering three statements — "God is spirit," "God is light," and "God is love." When our Lord tells the woman of Samaria that "God is spirit" (John 4:24), He is teaching her that while the substance of God is immaterial and invisible, it is of the nature of spirit: He is not characterizing the spirit substance in God, not distinguishing it from the spirit substance in other spirit beings. There can be no doubt that the spirit substance of angels is not identical with the spirit substance in God, which is uncreated, underived, subsisting from everlasting to everlasting. Not so in angels. In them it is a created substance. But this distinction or difference is not the point in our Saviour's conversation with the Samaritan woman. He is emphasizing the fact that God being of a spirit substance, it is unsuited to worship Him with material things — with shadows. He should be worshiped in spirit and reality.

Returning to 1 John 1:5, when the apostle says, "God is light," he is not speaking of God's spirit substance merely, but of His moral nature as well; He is declaring what one of the qualities is by which His moral character is distinguished.

Light and love describe God's character. Light is used here symbolically: a beautiful symbol it is. In the first place, light, constituted as it is of three distinct rays, is in itself a trinity in unity, and suitably symbolizes God as a unity of three distinctions. God is a trinity of one common substance. But this is not all that light speaks of. The distinctions in the Godhead are distinctions of personal relations. The three Persons constituting the Trinity are not only a trinity of one common spirit substance, but also of one common life, of one common moral nature and character. To say, "God is light," is not only to say the Trinity is of one common spirit substance, but also of a common moral nature, since the distinctions in the Godhead are distinctions of moral relations. The distinctions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinctions of individual and personal moral relations. As light is unchangeable, it beautifully symbolizes God as the unchangeable One, both in substance and moral nature.

Again, light is self-manifesting and therefore symbolizes the capability in God of manifesting Himself, of putting Himself in the light. The second Person of the Godhead eternally was its power to manifest itself, whether partially or fully. The partial revelations of God have been by the Word; through His incarnation and earthly life He has fully revealed God — the Father, Son and Holy Spirit — revealed their moral nature. It is in this sense that the Son of God is the light of men. In Him become Man the invisible Father is seen. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John

14:9). God the Spirit is able to make men sensible of His unseen immanence — that He is near even if invisible; but the Son not only manifests His nearness, but makes Himself visible — puts Himself in the light.

Again, as the symbol of what God is, light is transparent, perfectly transparent. It is thus the symbol of intrinsic purity, of God's moral character. To say "God is light," is to say He is holy; not only relatively, but absolutely so. His holiness is essential, intrinsic. This means He is able to preserve Himself as He is. As light is unchangeable; so is God incorruptible, untarnishable; it is impossible for any moral poison to come into His moral nature. No evil, no sin can ever originate or be in Him. What He is in moral nature and character He has ever been and must ever be. He cannot be deceived; "cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13). "God is light" tells us that His moral discernment is absolutely perfect. It is a moral impossibility for God to look complacently upon sin. He cannot behold iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13). If, then, His perceptions are unerring, His moral discernment absolutely perfect, His judgments must be right. He must perfectly resent everything that is contrary to what He is in His own nature. He can never compromise with what is against or in opposition to His character. That He is light is the assurance and guarantee of all this. And light is an active agent. It is not a passive thing affected by outside influences. Darkness may hinder its being seen; but seen or unseen it is ever the same. It is not moulded by powers outside itself. It is ceaselessly, uniformly active, symbolizing thus the active energy in God by which He ceaselessly and uniformly asserts or expresses His moral character.

We see, then, that in saying "God is light," the Spirit uses a most appropriate symbol, whether we think of God as a trinity of Persons, or community of spirit substance, or moral nature and character. In 1 John 4:1-21 the apostle says, "God is love." If light expresses the divine energy in manifesting the stainless and unstainable purity of God's moral nature, "love" expresses the energy of God in asserting and maintaining the absolute perfection of His goodness. Necessarily these two distinguishing qualities unite in God. If He were not absolutely "light" He could not be absolute goodness; and if He were not absolutely "love" — perfect goodness — He could not be unsullied light.

We return now to the thread of the apostle's argument. He has shown that the Son of God become Man has by word and work, especially by the cross, manifested the life eternal in its fulness and power; and that believers on the Son of God participate in the life thus manifested; that believers now not only share in the life but may know it, and so have the full joy which that knowledge gives. Then he declares the spotless purity of God's moral character as manifested in the Son come from God, that the participators in God's moral nature may apprehend and understand the character of the life and nature in which they share. This is used to test the reality of the profession as to possessing this divine life — whether the profession be our own or others'. The qualification to test whether the profession is real or not is the knowledge of what God is in His moral nature. But this knowledge must be, not only reliable, but authoritative. It is reliable, because the Son of God Himself has come and made known the truth about God. It is authoritative, because He was sent of God to reveal Him.

Again, the knowledge we possess of God's perfect moral nature is reliable and trustworthy knowledge, because it has been communicated to us by those who were personal witnesses of its revelation in and through the Son of God. These witnesses have borne testimony to what they

heard Him declare. It is His revelation that they have announced to us, and were commissioned by Him to make.

Let us notice also the form of the announcement. It is stated both positively and negatively. "God is light" declares what He is positively. The negative statement is, Darkness is not at all in Him. Through the Son of God become Man, God is in the light. Faith knows what He is morally as revealed in His Son. Of this life, through grace, the children of faith partake.

We have seen that God has put Himself in the light. The invisible God has made Himself visible in His Son become Man. Faith owns Him thus.

If then, for faith, God is in the light, believers are in the light also. On the authority of the divine testimony they can say that they know God. They can truthfully affirm that they have community of life with the Father and the Son. It is not a question of development in the knowledge of God: it is true of the babe in Christ. Though their acquaintance with God may not be based on long continued companionship with Him, they have an apprehension of what He is in His nature and character. This apprehension is, in greater or less measure, in every soul that sets to its seal that the testimony of God is true, i.e. — in every soul that is born of God. Feeble as his intelligence and apprehension may be, he is not speaking falsely when he says he knows God and has fellowship with the Father and the Son. He is in the light where he sees God — what He is. He is not in the darkness; he does not belong to it; he has passed out of it as surely as he has passed out of death into life. He is now one of those who live to Him who died and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:15); he lives and walks in the light.

It is necessary to notice here the expression "Walking in the light." It is important to apprehend the mind of the Spirit. The expression refers to a fact — not to the degree in which that fact is realized. The expression denotes the moral condition in which the children of God are by virtue of their new birth and the manifestation of the life they have been born into. The apostle is not speaking of their practical consistency with the light, but of their essential and necessary relation to it. They are in the light. It is the moral sphere to which they belong, with which they are connected. How far they are faithful or unfaithful is not in question here.

Now, for an unbeliever to say he is in the light, or to profess that he has community of life with God, is to make a false claim. He is in relation to the darkness, belongs to it, does not know God, has not the life eternal. He is not practising, not even feebly, the truth. He claims to be in relationship with God, to be His child, to be a sharer in His nature and life, but the claim is not true. Now that the light has come and is shining, those who are in it can judge and denounce as untrue the boastful professions of those who are not in it.

1 John 1:7 is a precious text for every child of God. There are two things affirmed in it of those who are in connection with the light. First, those who walk in the light with God now manifested, are now in the light with Him, participating in life with Him. They are one family. What a bond! What a blessed tie! How intimate and close the relation of one child of God to every other child of God. It is a relation of nature and life, always subsisting, abiding forever. Here again the apostle is speaking of the unchanging fact, an abiding fact, whether we are faithful or unfaithful. Of course, if we are faithful or unfaithful has much to do with our practical enjoyment of the ever subsisting bond. The normal outflow of the common tie is often interfered with through what violates its distinctive

character, but the tie once formed abides. It is an eternal tie; He who lives from everlasting to everlasting being the source of it, and in which, through grace, we have been brought. The rest of the verse is the declaration of a most important truth. Every child of God, every one born of Him (who is thus a participator in the life eternal), stands before the face of God in all the value of the priceless blood of Christ. The light in which God has put Himself shows that. What a blessed revelation! God Himself is in the light; the sin in us is in the light; and though we see it to be utterly abhorrent to God, yet the same light that shows this manifests how God removes all the defilement there is in us. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son is shown to be God's provision for it, and it is a perfect provision. The light itself can discover no sin in us for which that blood is not an absolute remedy.

Here I would make a practical observation. Those who come to the light, drawn there by the power of the grace of Him who is light, find the light manifests their deeds. Now this manifestation is not simply for the moment in which we first come to the light. It is a continuous work: the light constantly detecting in him the contrarities to the light; but in this searching of the heart, the light shines as well on God's remedy for the contrarities detected, and manifests its absolute perfection as a remedy. This sustains the soul before the light. No sin can possibly be discovered by the light for which God has not provided, or for which He is not perfectly sufficient. Hence the child of God can say, No matter what evil in me may be searched out by the light in which I walk, my abiding standing there is secured. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, in its infinite value and eternal efficacy, is what cleanses me before God. In the consciousness of this I may say, Let the defiling evil in me be searched out: nothing can possibly be brought out to light that can alter the abiding place of favor and blessing in which God has put me on the ground of the merits and value of the blood of Christ.

What peace! what rest! A sinful creature in myself, put before the face of One who makes me realize as I abide with Him how unlike Him I am, but to realize also that He who is thus constantly searching out the defiling evil that is in me is ever looking upon me as perfectly and eternally cleansed from it! May God grant to His beloved people to have an ever-deepening sense of this. But to return. In 1 John 1:8-9 the apostle deals with another pretension which the light manifests to be untrue. What characterizes those who through grace have come to the light is the confession of what that light manifests. It shows that men are sinful, that sinners practise sin. For any man to say he is not a sinner is to deny the truth; it is resisting the testimony of the light. The very claim makes manifest that those who make it are not in the realization of the truth. The truth is not in them. They are deceiving themselves.

It must be kept in mind the apostle is not here contemplating failure in the children of God to fully realize the truth. While it is true that the child of God may have such a feeble sense of the truth that he may be betrayed into similar language to that of the mere pretender, it is not characteristic of him as one who is in the light. John is reasoning in the abstract, not concrete. He is speaking of what is characteristic, of principles, not persons.

It is not characteristic of one born of God to deny that in himself he is a sinful man (see Luke 5:8), or pretend that he does not sin. The measure of his realization of what he is in himself is quite another matter. Speaking characteristically, as John does, he sets to his seal that the testimony of God is true, he accepts the truth, he owns as true of himself what the light has shown to be the

truth. To acknowledge oneself a sinful man is to acknowledge the commission of sins. And if the confession of having a sinful nature is characteristic of a child of God, it is also true, speaking still characteristically, that he confesses his sins. It is not simply that he confesses his sins when he first comes as a sinner seeking a Saviour, but as he walks in the light he owns the continuous exposures of his sins. The light in which he walks is constantly detecting them and manifesting them. But then as a child of faith he is the heir of God's promise: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). The believer is a son of Abraham and has the privilege of appropriating the promise to himself. The God who gave the promise is faithful; therefore, characteristically speaking, the believer has the divine assurance that his sins are forgiven. But it may be asked, Are not his sins a violation of righteousness? and do they not defile? The answer is, God is just in fulfilling His promise of forgiveness and remembering the sins no more. He has provided a remedy — a way of cleansing. He has given His own Son to bear the due of sins. Purification of sins has been made (Hebrews 1:3), and the Maker of it has the right of cleansing all who believe on Him. It would be unjust to Christ if God did not apply the purification to the one who believes on Christ Jesus. The believer, then, whatever the record of his sins, and however conscious of being sinful in himself, has the divine assurance that in the sight of God he is perfectly cleansed, and stands before His face eternally forgiven. As identified with the interests of Christ here on earth he is subject to divine discipline, correction or reproof. He is not exempt from the government of God. But as in Christ, he is cleansed from every unrighteousness.

Again, as stated in 1 John 1:10, if men claim they are not sinners by practice they contradict the testimony of God who declares that all have sinned. The light in which believers walk shows the claim is absolutely false. Any one making the audacious pretension that man is not fallen, has not the truth of God dwelling in him. All believers, characteristically speaking, set to their seal that God's testimony is true. The word of God dwells in them; it may be often in feebleness, very defectively realized, but as a class what marks them, all of them, is submission to what the light has made manifest, i.e., that man without exception is a sinner both by nature and practice. These haughty pretenders, then, are in and of the darkness which comprehends not the light (John 1:5). But the children of faith — being born of God and in the light, while confessing that grace has cleansed them from all defilement, do not deny that in themselves they are sinners both by nature and practice. The degree in which all this is realized is not the apostle's subject in these verses. This we must keep in mind to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

## 02.03 1Jn\_2:1-2.

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### 1 John 2:1-2.

It should be noticed that the apostle changes his style of address in 1 John 2:1. In 1 John 1:6-10, he uses the expression, "If we say," three times; "If we walk," once; and, "If we confess," once. It is plain he is speaking on the broad ground of profession. The profession may be real or it may not be, but the difference between the real and the unreal needs to be clearly defined. Having done this, he addresses himself in 1 John 2:1 to those with whom the profession is a reality. He has said of the profession which says "we have no sin," or "we have not sinned," that it is pretending to what is not true; but now the apostle would guard all true believers against making a wrong deduction. Because we have sin we must not conclude that therefore we must sin. Because we have a fallen, a sinful nature in us, it will not do to settle it in our minds that necessarily we must more or less practise sin. "My children, these things" (referring of course to what he has just been saying), "I write unto you, that ye sin not," safeguards the children of God against drawing the wrong conclusion we have mentioned.

One often hears this false reasoning; but Scripture, neither here nor elsewhere, allows it. It is not reasoning with the Spirit of God. But while the apostle here authoritatively pronounces against such reasoning, he does not forget the believer's liability to sin. Surely as long as we are in this body, with sin dwelling in it, we are liable to sin. If we have in us a sinful nature, we are of course predisposed to sin. The tendency to sin is there. But even so, that does not mean that the believer must sin. It is one thing to hold that there is in us a tendency or liability to sin, and quite another to believe we must necessarily sin. The former is the teaching of Scripture; the latter is not. But if there is in us a tendency to sin, we should not ignore the fact or forget it. To do either is to expose ourselves to an ever-present danger. We need to be constantly in a state of watchfulness against our predisposition to sin lest it manifest itself in an actual outburst. The apostle, then, would remind us of a danger to which we are exposed through our having in us what makes us liable to sin.

We are not to conclude that John and Paul are in conflict because Paul tells us, "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14), and John reminds us that we are liable to sin. Paul teaches that the body is still a mortal, sinful body, and so recognizes the liability to sin; while John, on the other hand not only recognizes the liability, but supposing an actual outbreak of sin, gives the provision which God has made for it in grace. Mark, he says, "If any one sin." He is looking at it evidently not as a necessity, but a possibility. God has given us deliverance from the power, from the rule, of sin, but we are not yet delivered from its presence in us; hence the liability to sin. It is an ever-present liability. But even so the apostle would not have the thought of our liability to sin to destroy the sense in our souls of the abiding, unchangeable character of the place of favor in which divine grace has established us. It is not only that the flow of communion with God the Father is intercepted if we sin — that is true of course, and there is need of recovery — but that is not exactly the apostle's subject here. The point here is, if an actual outburst of sin has occurred, what will be the effect of it on our relationship with God — on our position before the face of the

Father?

Now if we are born of God we are abidingly His children, and since the Son of God was in the world the children of God have had the right to take their place as that before God. It is now their privilege to think of themselves according to what they are as being in Christ; and this is always maintained by Christ. That is abiding; it is unchangeable. Christ is ever before the face of the Father. He is our Advocate there. What we are by grace, as in Him before God, is unchangeable, and our interests are in His hands. He has a righteous claim to be our representative there. Beloved brethren, do our failures, our sins, in anywise alter what He is there for us before the face of God? What He is there is what we are, not of course in ourselves, but as being in Him.

It may be needful perhaps to explain what is intended when I say, What He is before the face of God is what believers are. Let it be remembered that is distinctly what the word of God teaches. It is not a mere inference that I am drawing. In 1 John 4:17, we read, "Because as He is, so are we in this world." In what sense then is this true? Our standing before God is not according to what we are in ourselves. By the grace of God we have been made partakers of Him. This participation in Him is a reality. We have His nature, we partake of His life. As having it, for God we are characterized by it. What the nature and life are in Him determines what they are in us. Our bodies are yet to be conformed to His body. In this respect we are not yet "as He is," but as regards the life that has been given to us it is even now, while we are still in this world, what it is in Him. If we speak of ourselves as characterized by the life that has been imparted to us we may say, "We are as He is;" that is, simply saying, we have community of life with Him. But if we are participators with Him in life, the abiding character of that life does not depend on us. Whether we are faithful or not, the character of the life we have is unchangeable. We ought not to sin; there is no excuse for sinning; provision has been made sufficient to preserve us from it, and that notwithstanding there is in us the tendency to sin. But if on account of this tendency we are in the fear of falling into sin, there is great comfort for us in knowing that our possession of the life that is in Him cannot be affected, its character cannot be altered. To destroy our life, He who is the Source of it to us must be destroyed first. Nor can the character of the life given us be altered, as it cannot be altered in Him. The sins of believers have no such power. If we sin, He remains the same, and the believer, however troubled he may be about his sins, has the privilege of looking at Him and to say, By my sins I have falsified the life He has imparted to me, but in Him it abides in its perfect, eternal character. He is before the Father's face for me, my Representative there, my Advocate. In Him my relation to the Father is maintained in righteousness.

It will be asked: What then is the effect of sin in a believer? The answer is, It hinders the intercourse, the flow of fellowship. It limits the measure of the enjoyment of communion. But this is not the apostle's theme here. Nor is he speaking of the discipline needed to arouse the conscience, and awaken exercise and repentance and confession, nor of the priestly activity of Christ in cleansing the believer from the sin into which he has fallen. His subject here is the fact that the believer's life is maintained inviolate in the Person who is its source — the believer's constant representative before the face of the Father. As regards our sins, then, our Advocate with the Father is propitiation. This does not mean that He has to make propitiation for our sins. He did that on the cross. He does not need to make any further offering concerning sins. When He offered Himself it was once for all. He is not now making propitiation; Himself is the propitiation.

I shall have to inquire here, In what sense is He propitiation? The attentive reader will observe He is propitiation in a two-fold way, or perhaps better, in a two-fold relation. He is, first, propitiation in relation to the sins of believers; and, second, in relation to the sins of the world. The statement, "And He is propitiation concerning our sins" naturally follows the statement we have just now been considering. If Jesus Christ, the righteous One, is our Representative and Advocate before the face of the Father, we can readily understand that He is in the place of favor. In thinking of this we must not limit it to Himself. It is true of course that He is personally the object of the Father's favor. He was always that. He was that from eternity. But what I am now referring to is the fact that He is appearing "in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). He is in the place of favor for us. This means that God's attitude towards us is based on Him. We are the objects of the favor of God as being in Him. No doubt God takes pleasure in our faithfulness, but it is not on the ground of our faithfulness that God has taken us into favor. It is solely as being in Christ that we are in His favor. Having put us in Him by making us participators in the life that is in Him, He ever sees us as in Him. Christ then is His satisfaction concerning our sins. It is not that He does not abhor them; He surely does; but Christ having glorified Him concerning sins has an undisputed claim on Him for being looked upon as full appeal respecting the sins of those who through grace have come to be in Him. He is thus propitiation concerning their sins — the sins of all for whom He is an Advocate, and whom He represents as appearing in the presence of God.

What joy to the believer who has the knowledge of this! What comfort in knowing, when I have been ensnared and overcome, that as I turn to look upon my representative before the face of God, His gracious attitude towards me has not been affected; that He still looks upon me, not according to what I am in myself, but according to the One in whom He has accepted me.

We must turn now to consider the sense in which Christ is propitiation in relation to the sins of the whole world. I must first observe that the apostle does not imply that there is any need now of propitiation being made for the sins of the whole world. Since the cross, it is no more a question of making propitiation concerning sins. That was done then, done once for all, and it was done for the sins of all. Now it must not be inferred from this that all are saved from the due of their sins. That is not the fact. The making propitiation for the sins of all does not by itself save anybody. It provides a righteous basis on which salvation can be bestowed on all — on all who submit to the one condition on which it is offered, faith. Only believers are actually saved; but the propitiation concerning sins made at the cross was the ransom-price paid in behalf of all. It is not now the time of making propitiation, but the time of testimony. The gospel, which is for all, is a proclamation of an accomplished propitiation as a righteous basis of an offer of salvation, received by the believer. So, then, during this time of testimony God is not imputing sins to men. He is, by us, beseeching them to be reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Here we may ask, How is it that God has been content to wait so long on men to repent? How is it that He does not cut men off suddenly, and without mercy, who have refused His gospel and rejected the salvation He has offered them? The answer is: "Jesus Christ, the righteous" is before His face with a just claim on Him for a time of forbearance and long-suffering. He is thus Himself "propitiation concerning the sins of the whole world." God's present attitude towards the sins of men is based on Christ. It is because His eye is resting on Christ that He exercises patience. Christ is so fully His appeal, His satisfaction, that He is content to show long-suffering still, even though His mercy in it is despised.

I cannot leave this subject without a few further remarks. In what I have expressed above I have avoided errors that prevail in certain quarters to the injury of souls. The limitation of the propitiation, made at the cross, to the sins of believers, necessitates a limited provision. If that were the truth it would follow that salvation has been provided only for believers, whereas, in truth, it has been provided for all. All are invited to come and get it. None lose it because it is not for them, but because they decline to receive it.

Again, in this view, the evangelist can proclaim the gospel without any reserve. He can boldly tell men — all men — Christ died concerning your sins. He can unhesitatingly say, God has been so glorified about your sins by Christ's death, that on the ground of it He is now offering you salvation and is beseeching you to come and take it. You cannot refuse on the plea that the provision for salvation is only sufficient for a limited number. Every man can be told that the provision is for him, and that if he refuses it he can never say he perished because salvation was not provided for him. It is a misrepresentation of the gospel of God to say God has provided salvation only for those who actually believe. God has put no limit to the number who can be saved. He has made provision for all. While all thus can be saved, none are saved except they repent and believe the gospel.

Once more: When I insist that the provision for salvation is unlimited — is as truly for those who miss it as for those who get it — I am not teaching universal salvation. I am teaching universal provision — provision for all. But while all are provided for, many will not get what has been provided for them. Their not getting it is not because provision has not been made for them, but because of not availing themselves of it. The provision is for all; faith gets what has been provided; unbelief misses it. The distinction to which I call attention is between Christ making propitiation concerning sins by the death of the cross, and His being propitiation now as appearing in the presence of God. I would ask the prayerful meditation of the Lord's people on this subject. It supplies the key to the right understanding of the passage at which we have been looking.

It is also important to consider the two-fold sense in which Christ is now propitiation. If this is clearly apprehended there will be no difficulty in realizing that Christ's being propitiation for the sins of believers before the Father does not in any wise make light of their sins. It does not show that they are not a very serious matter, or can be treated as of light importance. How humiliated we should feel every time we think of them! And as regards His being propitiation for the sins of the whole world, if we rightly understand it we shall not be involved in applications which have no place in the mind of the Spirit of God.

## 02.04 1Jn\_2:3-11.

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1 John 2:3-11.

Before I proceed to consider the teaching of 1 John 2:3-11, a few words of an explanatory nature are required. In the portion we have examined, the children of God are authoritatively informed that they have community of life with God, with the Father and with the Son; that through the blood of Christ the stains of their sins no more attach to them; and that the life they are partakers of, and the cleansing that is connected with it through the blood of the cross, are abiding and unchangeable realities, infallibly maintained in the person of the One who is the believer's Representative in the presence of God. This knowledge is a matter of revelation. However true it all might be as a fact, we could not know it to be true of us if God had not made it known.

Thus far, then, we have been occupied with the objective reality — with what is objectively presented, or set before us. In saying this, I must warn my reader that in thus speaking, I mean, of course, objectively set before us as being true of us, i.e., of believers, and not merely as being something that has been established in Christ, and is true for us to be appropriated by us. I repeat, it is true of us. It is what God in His blessed grace has given us. It is what we really are in Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 2:3-11, there is an unfolding of the subjective side. The apostle now speaks of what is inwardly realized. Every believer is conscious of operations going on within himself. He may not necessarily understand or be able to explain them, but he is quite conscious of their presence in him. He knows something is going on within himself that never took place there before he was born from above. He has quite new desires, new aspirations, new hopes. He has new thoughts and feelings. He knows these things are not natural, but the result of a new power outside himself altogether. It is not simply a new power acting on him, but working in him. A new life has been received, and it is making itself felt.

Now, as he speaks of these new activities in his soul, he is simply saying, I know God; I am in Christ; I am in the light. It is not that he has apprehended the full import of these expressions, but the things he is conscious of mean that what they imply is true of him. He is a new creature, he has divine, eternal life; the true light is in him, so that he is in the light and has thus the knowledge of God; feebly it may be, yet, in whatever measure of power, it is true knowledge. He now knows that he is in relationship with God in a new way, though he has yet to learn the full blessedness of the relationship. He thus possesses the two-fold testimony that he is a child of God — the direct testimony of God (in which the truth and reality of what he has become through grace is objectively set before him), and the testimony of his own consciousness of what he realizes to be going on within him.

We must now look at the way in which these inward activities are manifested as being there; the way in which the believer takes note of the reality of their presence in him. He experiences in his heart the desire or spirit of obedience to God, and a love that makes others instead of self the centre of interest. As regards the spirit of obedience, its presence in the soul is displayed in two ways. First, in submission to what God has expressly commanded; and, second, in treasuring up

and keeping the communications of God's mind, of His will, of His heart. These two things exist together in the soul. I speak as distinguishing, not as separating. Wherever the one operation is found, so is the other. It is true, of course, that one may be more plainly discernible than the other, but wherever there is the spirit of submission to what God has commanded, there is also in greater or less measure the appreciation of what may not be an express command, but an expression of what is in His heart, of some purpose or counsel.

I turn now to the portion before us. The apostle says (1 John 2:3), "And hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." He is speaking of what every soul born from above realizes to be in operation within himself. He is conscious of the presence in him of the spirit of submission to what God has enjoined. He has heard the voice of the Son of God. He recognizes its authority. It is not that everything in him is in subjection to God, but he sees an operation within himself that is unnatural — an activity that he realizes to be from a new power producing in him what was never there before. He is conscious that now the spirit of submission to what God has commanded is in his soul. The strength of this new principle working within him is not what the apostle has under consideration here. He is not occupying us here with the measure in which this spirit of submission to what God has enjoined is developed. That is a distinct matter, and is not the apostle's point. What he is here directing our attention to is the fact of the presence, in the soul of one born from above, of this spirit of submission to what God commands. Every truly converted soul is characterized by keeping the commandments of God. Obedience to God marks him, in greater or less degree; but whatever the measure, greater or less, it is there, and the consciousness of it.

Now this consciousness is the witness that we know God. For us to say, "We know Him," is no pretense. It is no false profession; even though they see and recognize much inconsistency in themselves, they are not speaking falsely. The false professor is one who claims to know God with no spirit of submission whatever. The truth, the light, is not in him (1 John 2:4). There are many things in Scripture which God expressly commands; many things He expressly forbids; to the soul in whom the spirit of submission dwells, they have divine authority. Where this spirit of obedience is not, their authority is not owned and God is not known.

If the spirit of obedience is manifested in submission to what God has enjoined, it is also seen in the esteem in which the various communications are held. If God has rights over us which He requires us to maintain, it has been also His good pleasure to treat us as His friends (John 15:15). As being His servants, He commands us; as being in the position of friends, He communicates to us His thoughts. He reveals to us what He wishes us to know. Very many of His revelations are like the communications of one friend to another. They are not commands — something expressly enjoined, but expressions of His love. The child of God prizes these communications, and sees in them intimations of God's mind and will, and he observes them as carefully as he does that which God has expressly commanded. The character of this form of obedience is of a higher order than simple obedience to a positive command. It is doing God's will, even though He has given no command. It is of this form of obedience the apostle speaks in 1 John 2:5. He calls it keeping God's word. The soul to whom God has become an object of love, will find in that love a divine authority for all that God commands. It is, however, in prizing and keeping the word of God that this love for God gets its full character: "Whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." By this the apostle does not mean that the character of obedience which I have called

submission to commandments, is ever found without the other character of obedience. They go together. What the apostle means is, that the element of obedience exemplified in keeping God's word is what gives to the love of God its perfect or full character. To "keep His commandments" is one side of the character of the love of God; to "keep His word," is the other side. This latter side makes manifest that the love of God is perfected in the heart. But we must avoid the mistake of supposing that the love of God is present in its full character only in advanced Christians. It is present thus in every Christian. It is present in the soul from the moment the new birth has taken place. As soon as a soul is born from above he possesses a new nature. This new nature is an active nature. Its activities, its operations, are the expression of its character. From the moment the new life has been imparted (which immediately operates in the soul), it has a distinctive character of its own. All the elements of its character are there. I do not mean there will be no growth, but that the growth is the development of what is already present — the growth of the love of God already in the soul, as not lacking any of its characteristics.

We have seen that the consciousness of keeping the commandments of God is a witness to the soul in whom this consciousness exists, that he knows God. So, also, to be conscious of keeping the word of God is to know "we are in Him." The child of God is making no false profession when he speaks of knowing God, or of having community of life with the Son of God. As born of God, he lives by a life through which he dwells in God. Our Lord declared this to be the truth: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20). I am aware of the use some make of this passage, but our Lord is not singling out some special class among the family of God who were to know that they would have community of life with Himself in the day of the Spirit's presence on earth. He is declaring this knowledge to be the common heritage of all the children of God in the day to which he refers. He is not speaking of the extent to which they would enjoy the fact he is revealing. He is simply saying, When the Spirit is personally present on earth He will enable the children of God to realize that they are such. He will enable them to be conscious of being in the Son of God.

We have been considering the way in which this consciousness is proved to be in the soul of every believer: the consciousness of knowing God and of dwelling in the Son; in realizing that the spirit of obedience operates in his soul. This is made manifest to him — the desire to keep the commandments and word of God — which was not present in him as an unregenerate man. He sees resisting tendencies, and is conscious of a conflict going on, but he knows a new force is at work in his soul which he attributes to God. He knows the God of the Gospels and of the Cross has put it there, though the full significance of its presence may not yet be comprehended.

We must not forget that responsibility goes with the possession of a new nature — with being born from above. We are professing to possess the same nature and life that are in the Son of God if we profess to know Him and to be in Him — a nature and life which had its fullest expression in Christ's walk of unwavering obedience to God when He was in this world. He kept perfectly the commandments of God. Most earnestly, most heartily, He kept God's word. His life, His walk of perfect obedience, is our example and standard (1 John 2:6). It is in His steps we are walking, if we are in Him. True, we have to confess we are not walking perfectly, as He did, but our walk is the same in character as His. However far He has outdistanced us in the path of obedience, if we are following Him in the path He trod, we must not be discouraged, but press on after Him. May the Lord grant us steadfastness of purpose in seeking for His steps! In considering the import of 1

John 2:7-8, it will be necessary to refer to John 12:1-50. In John 12:49 our Lord says, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." He is here speaking of the testimony He has been giving from John 1:35 to chapter 12. This testimony He calls "a commandment," because it is what the Father had enjoined on Him as sending Him into the world. The Father had commanded Him what He should say — what He should speak. His testimony then — the word He had spoken — was the commandment of the Father.

Now what the Father had enjoined on Him to speak was the revelation of life eternal both in its principle and its constant activity. The eternal life that was with the Father had been declared, testified of, precisely as the Father had enjoined it to be done.

John was a representative of those who had heard the testimony the Son had given. He knew the word the Son had spoken — the word, the testimony, which was the revelation of life eternal. As we have seen in 1 John 2:3-6, the apostle has been writing of the activities of eternal life in the souls of those who through grace have become the recipients of it. In 1 John 2:7 he assures the children of God that he is not writing a new commandment — something different from what the Father gave to His Son as sending Him into the world. He is writing what they had heard from the lips of the Son of God Himself. He is writing of the life that is in the Son — the nature, character, and activities of which were fully manifested in His life upon earth.

Writing then of the old commandment — the Father's commandment to the Son — he is not introducing any new commandment; he is not speaking of some new revelation in advance of the Christian revelation; not of some progress beyond the revelation given by the Father through the Son. But if it is of the old commandment he is writing, of what is "true in Him;" there is a sense in which it may be called a new commandment: for the thing that is "true in Him" is also true in those who are born from above. The same life that is in Him is in them. They are in community of life with Him, participators of the life in Him — the life eternal. Once they were in the darkness — belonged to it, were a part of it — but they have been laid hold of by the light that shines in the darkness. They are following Him who is the light of life (John 8:12). They are in the light, and the light is in them. The darkness is thus passing away. They are delivered from the darkness by the light of life; and those who have the light of life dwelling in them are not walking in the darkness, but in the light. The same thing that is true in the incarnate Son is true in them. The light that is in Him is in them; the life that is in Him is also in them. In principle, it is the same thing in them as it is in Him.

It must be borne in mind that I am speaking of the nature and character of that which is "true in Him and in them," not of the degree of its manifestation. The manifestation of it in Him was perfect. There was nothing in Him to cloud and obscure its manifestation. How much, alas, there is in us to hide or check this life that is in us! The life that has been communicated to us is covered over to a large extent by the activities of the life that is natural to us, so that the characteristic activities of the imparted life are not seen in us in the perfection that they were seen in Him. But even so, having what is "true in Him" within us as a divine deposit, we are in the light, though the display of it in us is not full and perfect as in Him, what display there is in us is the display of the same thing that is in Him. It is in us through the light that is in Him laying hold upon our souls. The light in which He is the light in which we live and walk. To profess to be a child of God, to claim to be born from above,

to say, We know God and dwell in the Son, is to profess to be in the light — the light of life. But the profession may be made when the reality of the thing professed is wanting. The professions made therefore have to be tested, and the test of this claim is very simple. If there is no activity of love to those who are fellow-partakers of a common nature and life, the claim to be in the light is a false claim (1 John 2:9). As we have seen, the love of God dwells in those who are born of Him — with the elements of His nature, therefore. Love in God is active. It is His nature to love; and this activity of love is in those who have become partakers of the moral nature of God. This activity of God is displayed in His children in loving the brethren. Loving the brethren is the mark of the presence of divine love in the soul. Where it is not present, the soul is still in the darkness. The one in whom divine love is abides in the light. It is not an intermittent thing; sometimes there and sometimes not, but is dwelling there. However much its manifestation may vary on different occasions, the love that is of God is permanently and abidingly in the soul, and the soul is permanently and abidingly in the light — does not become a scandal (1 John 2:10).

Alas, how many scandals there are! How many are turning away from the truth! How many are giving up the faith! They are thereby manifesting themselves as not having the light of life in their souls. The profession to be in the light is mere profession — not a reality, but a scandal. The love that is of God is not in them; they are yet in the darkness; they know not God, and walk in the darkness. The light of life is not in them.

These apostates from the truth not only lack what marks one who is of God — the love that is of God — but there is enmity in the soul towards those professedly their brethren. The apostle calls it "hating his brother" (1 John 2:11). Loving the children of God is the fruit of knowing God; hating them is the fruit of not knowing Him — the, fruit of man's fallen nature. Those marked by enmity to the children of God are therefore in the darkness. They live and walk in the darkness; blinded by the darkness in which they walk, they know not whither they are going. The light of the Christian hope and prospect does not shine upon their path; they have not in their souls the cheer of trusting Christ as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The light that is in them is darkness, and how great that darkness is!

Before passing from this portion of the epistle, I wish to guard against two mistakes which are often made. When the apostle says, "He that loveth his brother," he is not thinking of the measure in which that love is manifested, not speaking of the perfection of its display, but of the fact of its existence in the soul as an active principle — a principle abidingly present and continuously operative, though it may be in varying measure as regards our observance of it. We must not therefore make the mistake, as is sometimes made, that failure in the display of that love proves its absence in the soul. If there is any measure of its display, the love is there. Indeed, only One has displayed it perfectly. All others must confess to coming short of the perfection seen in Him. When the apostle says, "He that hateth his brother," we must not understand him to be speaking of the outbursts of the flesh in true Christians. Sad, unnecessary and unjustifiable as these are, the apostle is not fixing our attention on them here, and we must not make the mistake of some who take them to be proofs of the absence of love. The love that is of God, however feebly exhibited, marks those who dwell in the light. Antagonism to those who walk in the light, displayed in varying measures, marks those who are of the darkness. This is what the Spirit expresses here by the apostle.

## 02.05 1Jn\_2:12-27.

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1 John 2:12-27.

We enter now on another division of the epistle. Before unfolding the characteristic features of eternal life in the children of God, the apostle pauses to show that he is addressing them expressly on the ground that they are children of God. If he is exposing false profession, it is not to raise doubts in the minds of those in whom it is a reality. If he contrasts the false and the real, it is not to make real children of God question whether they are such. He would have them know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13), that their sins have been forgiven for Christ's sake. The forgiveness of sins is the common blessing of all who have faith — all who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. It is not a question of how far they are in the realization or enjoyment of it, but of a fact which is true of those who are the subjects of the regenerating power of God. This blessed fact could not be known if it were not revealed; but God has revealed it; and those who are born of God accept the revelation. There may be varying degrees of faith in laying hold of the revelation, but it is the common faith of all saints that God has blessed them thus for Christ's sake. The merest babe in the knowledge of God is entitled to regard himself as not excluded. But if the apostle writes thus to the family of God as a whole, he does not forget or ignore the different degrees of development in which the children of God may be found. In verse 13 he defines them.

First, there are the "fathers," those who have matured in the experimental knowledge of God — the fruit of experience. Walking with God in practical subjection to His word as used by the Spirit, acquaintance with God has developed in them the realization of the unchanging character of "Him that is from the beginning," the apprehension that He is the one and only-abiding reality. As that, He is the object that stands out distinctly before them, attracting their thoughts and satisfying their hearts. Outside of Him there is nothing to desire; apart from Him there is nothing worth trying or seeking after. He alone can and does satisfy both mind and heart. Such are the fathers. Alas, how few there are! How few have so matured in the knowledge of Christ, that it is a practical reality that He is everything! But what wise counselors are the real fathers! What safe leaders and guides! May God grant us more of them.

Second, the "young men" are those whose experimental knowledge of God is less advanced than that of the fathers, though not inexperienced. They are overcomers. They have had conflicts and have overcome. Through conflict they have gained in strength. They have acquired skill in the use of the word of God; they have learned their dependence on the Spirit of God in resisting error and defending the faith. Their experience has given them knowledge; and knowledge thus obtained is of great value. It is a knowledge of Christ, yet not maturity in that knowledge. Though faithful workers and earnest defenders of the faith, they are not yet necessarily safe leaders and wise counselors. Their knowledge of God needs rounding out through continued companionship with Christ and deeper practical intimacy which gives maturity in wisdom and knowledge. In contrasting the "fathers" and "young men," the apostle is not writing depreciatively of the young men. He is not calling the fathers spiritual and the young men unspiritual; but the experience of the "fathers" has

given them greater maturity. It must not be understood to mean that they have reached a stage where they have no more to learn, but that Christ has been experimentally proved to be the one abiding reality and satisfaction for the heart, in which, however, there is ever growth and development.

Now as to the "babes" — I say "babes" because, as is well known, the word for "little children" in 1 John 2:13 in the Greek is not the same as in 1 John 2:12. The word in 1 John 2:12 is comprehensive, embracing the entire family, the whole household of faith. In 1 John 2:13 it is a restrictive word, applicable only to a specified part of the family. The babes are the experimentally undeveloped — the inexperienced in the practical knowledge of God, the knowledge of Christ. The apostle is not speaking disparagingly of those he calls "babes" — not as unspiritual, not as in a wrong state of soul. He does not look upon them as not having all Christian privileges and full Christian blessings. Nay, they are entitled to, and have, everything that goes along with the forgiveness of sins — that goes with faith in Christ. But he is thinking of their practical knowledge, i.e., the knowledge they have acquired through experience. In "babes" experience is beginning. They have had little or no experience in service or in conflict, consequently have not gained the knowledge that is acquired in those ways. Not that they are absolutely without any experience, but it is what I may call the initial experience of Christians — knowledge of God as their Father. Every one born from above has to do with God, according to the revelation He has given of Himself in different dispensations. From new birth the child is having to do with the Father, is having some knowledge of Him, and is learning of Him. Hence of all children of God, however little service they have seen, however little conflict they have had, it can be said, "Ye have known the Father." They need to acquire fuller knowledge of Him, but they are not altogether destitute of experimental knowledge of the Father.

It is clear that it is in reference to experimental knowledge that John divides the family of God into these three groups — not in respect to revealed Christian blessings. Life, forgiveness, the indwelling Spirit, adoption, union with Christ, membership in His body, the Church, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, and more, are blessings common to all who belong to the family of God in this dispensation; but it is not in reference to these blessings the apostle speaks of "fathers," "young men," and "babes." These terms have to do, as we have pointed out, with development in experimental or acquired knowledge.

If in respect to experience and practical knowledge the children of God are divided into three groups, we may well expect that the apostle has something special to say to each group. Let us proceed to consider what it is.

1 John 2:14-27 give a special message to each grade in which the apostle has divided the family of God. In these messages John reaffirms the character he has already given to each grade; a character based on practical experience, as we have seen. In addressing himself again to the "fathers," nothing is added to what he first said. The reason of this is plain. The experience of the fathers has been such that Christ — "Him that is from the beginning" — is the one absorbing Object of their hearts. They have become so engaged with Him that everything else has ceased to have value in their eyes. He alone now attracts them, and they are not in need therefore of special warnings. There is no necessity of pointing out snares and dangers to them. It is sufficient therefore to mention them as being in this practical knowledge — as fathers in the family of God.

But in the case of the young men, not having as yet this advanced knowledge of Christ, there are dangers to which they are exposed. The apostle shows them against what they specially need to be on their guard, and in 1 John 2:15-17 indicates the true way of escape.

We first notice that in describing their character here the apostle adds to his previous characterization of them. He had spoken of them as having overcome the wicked one; he now adds, "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you." I judge he refers to the experience through which they have passed in conflict over the word of God. The wicked one has sought to wrest it from them; to weaken their faith in it; to induce them to give it up. But they have withstood him; have stood firmly for the faith; have fought for it. The result of the conflict is seen in the strength they have developed. They have acquired ability in service; have learned how to convict gainsayers, and to stop the mouths of those who oppose. They are earnest in maintaining the truth as revealed of God — the word of God is in power in their souls; it abides in them. The apostle recognizes their devotion and approves their zeal. He rejoices in the result for them of the conflicts in which they have approved themselves. They have come through them with great gain in strength, in skill, in experimental knowledge. But while thus occupied in conflict, their attention has not been drawn to the allurements and fascinations of the world. Now that they have become proficient in the word of God, with ability to meet and answer the assaults of the enemy upon the truth of Christianity, they are less likely to be the objects of the enemy's direct attacks. The world now offers an opportunity for the exercise of the ability and power thus manifested, and will seek to enlist in its projects those on whom they look as men of success. And here are temptations for such as are full of energy! — movements designed to advance morality, to help and elevate the unfortunate, to reform those who have fallen into evil ways, to correct social and civic evils, are especially alluring; and the energetic and zealous Christian is in danger of being drawn into them. They seem to offer opportunity for the exercise of gift and knowledge. To many, such opportunities are very attractive. It is said, Here is a chance to do good; and, on this ground, joining such movements is justified. It is argued: Is it not right to help men to be better? Is it not serving Christ to help on such movements as are designed for the betterment of men? Ought we not to do all in our power to aid plans and schemes that aim at the moral uplift of the unfortunate, the degraded, the fallen? From the standpoint of the world such movements undoubtedly are justifiable; from the standpoint of Christianity it is quite a different matter. That they benefit the world will not be denied; that they promote the interests of Christ is much more than doubtful. The world, not Christ, is their object. The world seeks its own things, not the things of Christ. It is the love that is of the world, not the love that is of the Father, that characterizes all its projects. It is the glory of the world that is sought, not the glory of Christ. But Christian love is the love that is of the Father. The activity of the love that is of Him should mark the Christian, not the activity of the love that is of the world. Hence, the apostle exhorts the young men not to love the world, or the things of the world. He puts the two things — the love of the world and the love of the Father — in direct contrast, as being diametrically opposites. He would not have the young men entangled in what is opposed to the love that is of the Father. It is against entanglement with the world or its things that he is warning them. And to help them escape entanglement he points out the three principles which underlie everything that is in the world. He is of course not speaking of the physical world, but the world of which fallen, sinful man is the centre, the world which has been built up around the failed first man. Everything in his world is characterized by three principles — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These three things mark every scheme that is of the world. Every

worldly project or movement is stamped by these three principles. Now the love that is energized by these principles is not the love that is of the Father. The Christian, then, when enticed by the world or some worldly project, has but to ask, What are the ruling principles to which I must subject myself? Is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life what characterize the movement he is desired to connect himself with? If so, he may know it is not of the Father.

What a simple rule! What a certain safeguard! Am I asked to take part in any movement in which the desires of the flesh are ministered to? I may unhesitatingly decline. It may be pleaded it is benevolent, but it is not the love that is of the Father. I may be told of a certain scheme which, if I will link myself with it, will afford me opportunity for advancement in the world; will make life in this world more enjoyable; will provide me with avenues to gain, to the possession of things seen; but that is the lust of the eyes — not the love that is of the Father. I may be assured too that I will be greatly respected and honored, but that is the pride of life. It is not of the Father, who would lead me to honor Christ — not to seek to be honored where He was dishonored.

No, the energy of the Christian is not to be spent in furthering the interests of this world. He is to be in the world for Christ. For Christ, and not for the world or self. If the Christian loves not the world or the things in the world, he will find Christ to be every way a satisfying portion. What experiences will be his — experiences of Christ! What lessons of Him will be learned! What pleasures will be realized! What possessions of wisdom and knowledge will be discovered! How much there is in Christ to glory in and boast of! As Christ is thus learned, how the world grows dim! How the things of the world lose their attractiveness and power, as what Christ is is practically experienced!

How great, alas, is our loss in diverting our energies into channels in which the profit is merely in present things — not the eternal things. The apostle is here showing us how to escape suffering this loss. The Spirit of God would have us spend our strength in seeking the things of Christ. We will find, if we take His way, it will mean rich gain in experimental knowledge. But the apostle has yet one more word for the young men. He says: "The world is passing away and the lust thereof." Another apostle has said, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away" (1 Peter 1:24). For the Christian to be ensnared in the love of the world or the things of the world, whatever present worldly advantage he may gain, in the end it will be a sad experience. The stamp of death is on the entire present scene, and the world of the fallen first man is under the judgment of God. It must pass away. It will not abide. But the one who practises the will of God will abide for ever. He is born of God — of the abiding word of God; has in him the abiding nature and life of God. It is eternal life that is dwelling in him. In so far as such an one turns aside from the things that minister to the life that is of God, to participate in what builds up the world, he is exerting himself in what is passing away, not in what abides. May the gracious Lord stir up His beloved people to be zealously active in that which is the will of God, to energetically seek the things of Christ! May we be characterized as those who desire to advance in experimental knowledge! Let us remember that the way to acquire this knowledge is to heed the apostle's warning, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." The apostle now turns to the babes again (1 John 2:18-27). He directs their attention first of all to the fact that it is the last time. This expression, "the last time," signifies the time of the rise and progress of certain evil principles; the full development of which will be the apostasy under the Antichrist. The apostle Paul, in quieting the minds of the Thessalonian saints, who were disturbed by the representation of some that the day of Christ was present, assured them that before that

day came there would be an apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He also shows what this will be, when fully developed. A "man of sin," a "son of perdition," is to arise who will carry his opposition to God to the height of claiming to be God himself. That blasphemous claim will be the measure of his iniquity. The principle of it was already at work in apostolic days. The spirit, the animus, of the coming Antichrist was already there. The presence of this character of evil in various forms while yet there were apostles on earth, made it manifest that the time, characterized by blasphemous antichristian principles, had begun. The spirit of the Antichrist was there, though not yet developed as it will be in him when he comes. How this spirit has since progressed! How many movements of the present day are animated by it! If the Antichrist himself has not come yet, his spirit — his character — is plainly discernible in many current activities.

We can thus understand the apostle's concern as to the babes — the inexperienced. They need to be instructed as to the character of the time, the tendencies of it. They need to be put on their guard against all those activities that are the prelude to the Antichrist's coming and manifestation. Hence the apostle in tender, pastoral care, tells the inexperienced babes of the family of God, "It is the last time" (1 John 2:18). But he does not simply call their attention to the fact of its being the last time, he wants them to be fully awake to the seriousness of it. It is not some obscure evil of insignificant activities that confronts them, but wide-spread, active evil, manifesting itself in many places and in various forms. If the Antichrist himself has not yet come, there are already many antichristian tendencies; many movements in which the spirit or mind of the Antichrist is showing itself. The evil, instead of being obscure, is very prevalent, of great strength and energetically progressive. Attention is called to this, as well as to the fact of its being the last time; and thus we realize that the antichristian blasphemy is a characteristic of the time. We know it, not only as a matter of revelation, but as a matter of observation. Its trend as away from, and opposed to, the word of God, is a matter of common talk. The denial of inspiration, of the virgin-birth of Christ, of the supernatural, of the resurrection of Christ's body, and much more, is not only current in many quarters, but it is a matter of frequent comment. Even the on-looking world can distinguish between present day Christianity and apostolic Christianity. The evidence of its being the last time is overwhelming. The saddest feature of it all is that these pro-claimers of antichristian doctrines have risen up in the very sphere of the profession of Christianity. They are themselves professors who have departed from "the faith once delivered unto the saints," and, while retaining the Christian name, are apostates from the truth held by God's people as a deposit from God (Jude 1:3). But the fact of their not abiding in the truth has manifested them as never having been of the truth. The truth was never really in them. They were of the family of God only by profession. They are not in the light, and the light is not in them. They are not in community of life and nature with God: they are not participating in the thoughts, feelings, joys and activities of the Father and the Son. They are not of us — of the family of God (1 John 2:19).

One distinguishing mark of the children of God in this dispensation is the anointing from the Holy One — the Holy Spirit. Even the inexperienced babe has it. By the Spirit of God who dwells in the bodies of all believers now, the ear of the child of God is empowered to hear the truth revealed, by which the hand is strengthened to do His commandments, and the feet energized to tread the path of faith. Ear, hand and feet having been purchased with the precious blood of Christ; the Spirit uses them in the interests of the truth of God. The child of God then has an ear consecrated to the truth. The Spirit who uses his ear is his capacity and power to hear the truth (1 John 2:20). By their

abandonment of the truth, the apostates make it manifest that they lack this distinctive mark of the Christian. They lack the ability to hear the truth. In 1 John 2:21 the apostle assures the inexperienced babe that in writing thus strongly about these antichrists, it is not because he suspects them of being such. He sets them fully at ease as to this. He expresses unequivocally his confidence in them. The babes, inexperienced though they may be, are in the light, and the light is in them. They know the truth. They possess it as from God. They are in the realization of their link with God. Possessing and enjoying this link through what they had heard from the beginning — the truth — they realized and understood that no lie is of the truth. It is not that babes have taken in and grasped the full range of God's thoughts, or understood fully the counsels of His will, or adequately comprehended the purposes He has revealed; but there is in their souls the knowledge of God, and by this knowledge, whatever the measure of their grasp of it, they are sensible that no lie is of the truth.

While antichristian doctrine expresses itself in varied forms, yet its detection is easy even for the inexperienced babe. There are two lines along which the opposition developed against Christianity moves. The antichrists, whatever the special form in which they assert their tenets, either deny that Jesus is the Christ — the Jewish form of unbelief — or else deny the distinctive Christian revelation — that of the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22). Undoubtedly the Antichrist himself, when he comes, will do both. He will adopt the Jewish opposition to Jesus, denying that He is the Christ, and to this will unite the denial of the Father and the Son. Both forms of error exist to-day and are widely current. They characterize the apostasy as now developing. The Antichrist will find them ready for his hand; he will appropriate them and expand them, for he will not only deny that Jesus is the Christ, but claim to be Christ himself. And to this claim he will add another: he will exalt himself by claiming to be God. The Father is not now professedly and openly denied. It is quite the fashion to talk of the fatherhood of God. In every system of error the claim is made that they have the Father. This the apostle will not admit if they deny the Son (1 John 2:23). He that denies the Son hath not the Father. Only those who acknowledge the Son have the Father.

We have previously seen that the apostle includes the inexperienced babes among those who know the Father. In that which they have heard from the beginning, they have what gives them the knowledge of the Father. He goes on then to exhort them to let that knowledge have its practical activity in their souls. It is thus they will abide in, live in, the practical enjoyment of the Father and the Son (1 John 2:24). This is eternal life (John 17:3) — the life promised to faith (1 John 2:25). It was promised in Genesis 3:15, when God told the woman she should have a conquering Seed; in John 10:10, when the Good Shepherd said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it in full quality;" in 1 John 2:28, when He said, "I give unto my sheep eternal life;" and in numerous other passages beside. It is the life that was with the Father, and manifested by the incarnate Son, of which through grace believers have been made partakers. It is community of life with the Father through the Son. What a blessed, holy, happy life! What fulness of joy!

1 John 2:26-27 conclude the apostle's special address to the babes. He has written them in this special manner because he has had the errorists, the antichrists, in mind. They are seducers, leading astray. He is anxious to shield and protect, the inexperienced babes. Hence he has addressed them as desirous of showing them what the marks of the antichrists are. In doing this he has also exhorted the babes to continue, or abide, in what they had heard from the beginning — that is, to hold fast the revelation given them of God, which they have ability to understand and

enjoy in the Spirit that has been given them of God. But while he has been exhorting them thus, and earnestly urging them to let the truth they have from God have its practical activity and power in their souls, he assures them of his confidence in them. They are not to think that he doubts their possession of the Spirit. He says: "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you." He wants them to realize that through this abiding Spirit they are placed above the need of having any one tell them what is the truth. Any teaching that is not of the Spirit abiding in us, is of man, not of Him. Believers have no need of it. It may be represented as a development beyond what was given from the beginning. It may be commended as higher truth, but the Christian has no need of it; having the Spirit, he has no need of human authority to know what should be believed. Our Lord assured His disciples that the Spirit, when He should come, would teach them all things. He told them He would enable them fully to recall all He had taught them (John 14:26). This He has done in the four Gospels which we possess as a sacred deposit from Him. Further, our Lord assured His disciples that the Spirit would faithfully show them all that He desired yet to reveal to them (John 16:12-15). The Acts, Epistles and Revelation is the work of the Spirit in fulfilment of this promise of Christ. This — what the Spirit has given us — is our heritage; having given it, and He Himself dwelling in us to make it all good to us, we need no one to tell us what is the truth.

Now He who has taught us the truth, who is Himself truth and no lie, teaches that those who know the truth will abide in it. It is a part of His testimony that those who are in the Father and the Son will abide in them — in a community of life and nature which is unchangeable and eternal. If it be insisted that "Him" should be "it" (though there be very little ground for it), it amounts to the same thing. God, who has called us by His own glory and excellence, has made us partakers of His life and nature, whose activities are developed and maintained in us by the power of the greatest and precious promises He has given us. While there is responsibility resting on us to abide practically in the truth, God has made provision for this — a provision which secures practical dependence upon the truth. The apostle then can say, even of the inexperienced babes, "Ye shall abide in Him." He will not close his special message to them without giving them this assurance of his confidence that they are such as the anointing, the Spirit of truth, affirms will abide. This division of the epistle closes here.

## 02.06 1Jn\_2:28 to 1Jn\_3:24.

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1 John 2:28-29; 1 John 3:1-24 The apostle now turns to a consideration of the ways in which the life eternal manifests itself in those in whom it dwells. He begins by setting before us a most solemn fact. The one who professes to have, but has not, life in the Son, will be ashamed in His presence when He appears. The false claim and its presumption will be shamed away from Christ's presence (1 John 2:28).

What then are the marks of its possession? It is made manifest by its own characteristic activities. Those who are born of God derive from Him who is the source of it, a nature which has its own characteristic features. Our Lord could say: "He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him" (John 7:18). He was manifested as the righteous One in a life which constantly sought the glory of Him who sent Him. His life constantly bore witness that He is the righteous One. And those who have been born of God have derived from Him a life characterized by the aims and objects which characterized our Lord. The children of God are marked by that fact — by the practice of righteousness; it manifests them as being partakers of the life eternal; it proves them to be children of God (1 John 2:29).

If they are thus characterized, it is of the grace of God. The life which thus manifests its presence in us, witnesses that we are the subjects of a work of grace. No wonder the apostle exclaims: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!"\* It is by grace we are His children, and through His grace we know it and have the liberty to take the place of children before Him. This is the kind or fashion of the love He bestows upon us. No angel is loved with such a love. God has seen fit to reserve this for us, whom He has redeemed from among sinful men.

{\*The Greek has "children," not sons. John speaks of relationship by life — not of position, as Paul does.} But what a transformation has taken place in us! From living to ourselves and seeking the praise of men, we are led to walk in His steps who sought the glory of Him who sent Him. We have been turned from the practice of sin to the practice of righteousness; from being governed by our own lawless wills to being governed by the will of God; from aims, ends, purposes and objects natural to us, to the aims, ends, purposes and objects of Him who came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who sent Him. On this account, therefore, the children of God are not understood by the world. It can understand the pursuit of earthly and seen things, but it cannot understand the Christian's disregard of them. To be guided and controlled by heavenly and unseen things is a mystery to them. There is a day coming when the world will see us in glory with Christ; for, when He shall be manifested, we shall also be manifested with Him (Colossians 3:4). It will then know that we are sharers in the Father's love of His Son (John 17:22-23). But we have not to wait until that day to know we are children of God. We have the knowledge of it now. In the day of manifested glory, we shall be conformed to the image of Christ; we shall be like Him. It has been distinctly revealed to us (1 John 3:2).

Attention is called to the fact that we are to be conformed to Him as He is, not as He was. When the Son of God became incarnate, He assumed humanity in the form in which we are in this life. In men it is a fallen, sinful humanity; in Him it was unfallen and sinless; but even so, it was in the same form. He took part in flesh and blood, which we have. That form of humanity ended with His death. When He rose He took it up in a new form. In 2 Corinthians 5:16, the apostle Paul says: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." This was the lesson our risen Lord taught Mary Magdalene in John 20:1-31, when He said to her: "Touch Me not." She thought she had got Him back as He was before He died. Never again will He be in that form, but ever in the form of humanity He took up when He rose. We are to see Him as He is. We are to be like Him as He is — in manhood indeed, but in the form of humanity in which He now is. To be changed into His image means to have bodies fashioned after the body He now has. Not to have unfallen, sinless humanity simply, but in the condition in which our Lord now is.

What a hope! What a blessed prospect! "Like Him," both morally and physically! There is sanctifying power in such a hope. Every one who has this hope in relation to Him, purifies himself. The Man Christ Jesus is not only the standard of perfect moral perfection, but of physical perfection also. The very desire to be as Christ is, to be in His image, will produce moral conformity to Him now (ver. 3). It will promote and develop the practice of righteousness, which manifests one to be a child of God. The children of this world are marked by the practice of sin, by the activity of their own wills — not in subjection to God. (It scarcely needs to be remarked that 1 John 3:4 should be translated, "Whosoever practises sin practises lawlessness; for sin is lawlessness.") The Son of God came into the world to take away our sins (1 John 3:5). He had to stoop to the depths of the judgment of God upon our lawless practice to deliver us from what by such practice we justly deserved. It strongly shows, therefore, that the practice of sin cannot characterize one who is born of God. But there is another statement in this verse equally strong: "In Him is no sin." This is true, whether we think of Him as He was here upon earth, or as He is now, risen and ascended to heaven: "In Him is no sin." Those born of God have received from Him a sinless nature. The life He has imparted to them is characterized by the same features as in Himself, in keeping therefore with righteousness. The children of God then, as being that, as abiding in the Son of God, do not practise sin. Such practice is altogether foreign to their nature; having community of life with Him, they cannot practise sin (1 John 3:6). He that practises sin is not abiding in Him, has never seen Him, does not know Him. The practice of righteousness is not natural to us, but the practice of sin is. To know and to practise righteousness, then, we must know Him who is righteous. The apostle is especially in earnest that the children of God should realize this. He says, in 1 John 3:7, "Let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous;" it is the mark by which those are distinguished as children of Him who is righteous; while, on the other hand, the practice of sin distinguishes those who are in identification with the devil (1 John 3:8). A creature who abode not in the truth (John 8:44) became the originator of sin in man. From the time that iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15) the practice of sin has marked him, and he is the great leader in the practice. It is this practice that manifests the world as being in association with, as of him. Through him, the original author of sin, works of evil have been found among God's creatures, whether angels or men. The practice of sin everywhere is of his instituting; it is his work. The apostle reminds us now that the Son of God was manifested for the purpose of undoing the works of the devil. Every trace of him who introduced sin among God's creatures is to be removed. By the power of the blood of the cross all things, whether

earthly or heavenly, will be brought back into a state of perfect harmony with God, absolutely and permanently purged from the defilement of sin (Colossians 1:20). Acting according to His own nature, the Son of God will remove sin from God's creation. Having already laid the basis for it in the work of the cross, He will entirely undo this scandal — the work of the devil.

"Which thing is true in Him and in you." As already said, righteousness attaches to the life we receive from Him. Its activities, not only in Him, but in us also, are all righteous. God's seed — His nature — abides in them. As in that nature the practice of sin is impossible to them (1 John 3:9).

It is needful to realize that the apostle is reasoning in the abstract. When he says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not practise sin," he is speaking of the child of God characteristically. He is not overlooking the fact that the old nature is still in him, but he does not consider that in giving his character as a child of God. He is not excusing the Christian's failures — he is not making light of the sins into which a child of God may fall, but it must necessarily be omitted in any abstract description of his character.

Another thing must also be remembered. The apostle is speaking, not of the perfection in which the character of the child of God is manifested, but of the fact that the practice of righteousness, whatever the degree of the perfection of its display, is a distinctive mark of God's children.

If the reader will keep in mind these things, he will not find it difficult to understand the account the apostle here gives of a child of God.

It may perhaps be well to restate this before we proceed to consider the next feature by which the children of God are characterized. Every child of God is born of One who is righteous, of One in whom there is no sin. His nature is a righteous nature; its activities are all righteous activities. The children of God have in them this seed of God — a sinless nature. It is this seed that distinguishes them as born of God. It is an abiding seed; ever operative according to its own righteous nature. All its activities are righteous; not one of them is sinful. The children of God, viewed abstractly, not only do not practise sin, but are incapable of it. It is incompatible with the righteous nature by which they are characterized as born of God.

It is not only the practice of righteousness that marks one who is born of God, but loving his brethren (ver. 10). We must now consider what the apostle says in reference to this.

It is to be noted that he mentions the two characteristics in a way that shows they go together. A child of God cannot be marked by one without the other. They are inseparable. If one is lacking, so is the other. We have seen that there is in the child of God a nature that is perfectly holy. This holy nature asserts itself in two ways — in the practice of righteousness and in loving the brethren.

Let us remember the apostle is speaking, not of the measure of realization or degree of enjoyment, but of what is characteristically true of all children of God. He is not discussing the hindrances to the full expression of the divine nature in us, but what is true in fact. It is the fact that is insisted on, not the extent in which it is displayed. If doing righteousness and loving the brethren are in any measure present, if they are at all in operation, the divine nature is there. There may be still much evidence of the old nature's presence which characterizes us as natural men — it shows what we are as natural men; not what we are as born of God. It is the operations of our new nature that display what we are as having been born of God, although overshadowed often by those of

the old. They are in error, however, those who reason that the old nature is done away by the new, and teach that the evidence of the presence of the old proves an absence of the new.

All this that I have been saying is of the greatest moment if the apostle is to be understood. If we read him intelligently, it must be seen that he is speaking in the abstract, that he is writing of what is characteristically true, and thus of what is true of every believer, of every child of God. For proof of the statement that loving the brethren is a mark of a child of God, the apostle appeals to the message or instruction of the incarnate Son of God (1 John 3:11). He refers to the fact that love to one another should characterize them. In John 13:34-35, He said: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Our Lord is not simply pressing upon His own the obligation or responsibility to love one another, but that it would be a mark by which the reality of their professed discipleship would be manifested. John appeals to this as a mark of the children of God. A child of God is one who has been born of Him, and so is of God — not like Cain, who was of the evil one (1 John 3:12). His works therefore were evil. There was, even then, light shining sufficiently to manifest whether his works were wrought in God or were evil. The light exposed his works, showed them to be evil. God's acceptance of what Abel had wrought in God manifested Cain's deeds to be evil. Cain therefore hates the light. His murder of Abel manifested his hatred of the light. The children of God come to the light, and the light manifests them to be of the truth; it shows that their deeds are wrought in God (John 3:21). However misunderstood by the world, the children of God are seen to be doers of righteousness and lovers of their brethren.

If Cain represents the natural man in his rejection of the testimony of God, and is an example of the world's hatred of the light which exposes its evil deeds, the children of God need not wonder at the world's hatred of them (1 John 3:13). Our Lord said to His disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). If it hates Him, if it refuses Him who is the Light, it will desire to rid itself of every witness to Him. The light, even feebly reflected by the believer, is unwelcome to it. But we have passed out of death into life. We have the testimony of the Son of God for this (John 5:24). John, however, does not appeal to this here but to love to the brethren (1 John 3:14). "He that loveth not his brother" he says, "abideth in death." If he does not love, he hates; and "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15); that is, he is identified in nature and character with him who "abode not in the truth," but became a murderer and liar (John 8:44).

"Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" has often been misunderstood. It has been taken to mean that no murderer can be saved. Let us seek to understand what the apostle says. In the first place, he declares that "whosoever hates his brother is a murderer." Is it not plain that the apostle points to the nature which characterizes one who, like Cain, is of the wicked one? Thus a man does not need to take the life of a fellowman to be a murderer; he is that by the very fact that he possesses that nature. In this sense all men are murderers by their very nature since the fall. But when the grace of God lays hold of one who is such in the eyes of God, he is born anew, "born from above." He possesses a new nature, which now characterizes him in God's eyes. God looks upon him as having passed out of death into life. He no more looks at him according to the old nature which is still in him, but according to what he is as born of God. A new life dwells in him. It is in the character of this new life that God now views him.

We have spoken of love to the brethren as evidence of a new nature received from God; but it may be said: Is not God above us, beyond us? Do we not read, "No man hath seen God at any time?" How then is it possible for us to comprehend the activities of love in God? It has been manifested in the person of His Son whom He sent into the world to lay down His life sacrificially in behalf of men (1 John 3:16). In this we have learned what the love of God is. The knowledge of this divine love is abiding in the soul that has bowed to the meaning of the Cross of Christ. The activities of love in God must necessarily characterize His children. It is not merely a question of duty or obligation, but a characteristic of their nature, which in communion with God displays itself. This is the force of 1 John 3:17. Of course, the verse may be used as an appeal to rouse the conscience where there seems to be carelessness or indifference, but the apostle is convicting of unreality the mere profession of loving the brethren. His argument is, How can love be there if there is no activity of it? How can love that is of God be dwelling where it is not in exercise? There is danger, even in the children of God, of falling into pretension. So in verse 18 the apostle warns against it. Clearly he is speaking here to those whom he recognizes as of God. He is exhorting them to see to it that there be no pretence; no mere loving in word or tongue, but only in deed and in truth. Unreality is a grievous sin in a child of God; it is really hypocrisy. Let us then give due heed to the apostle's warning against it. Our Lord also speaks of this in Luke 12:1.

What is the test of reality? 1 John 3:19-20 are the apostle's answer. It is for us to know — to realize — that we are of the truth. It is the privilege of the child of God to assure his heart before God. "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Those who "walk in the light as God is in the light" realize this; they are conscious that all unreality is exposed before Him. What enables us to stand in the light, in which no unreality can be tolerated, is the atoning blood of Christ. It is that which gives us assured hearts before God, before whom all is thoroughly searched out. He who is greater than our hearts has provided us with what gives us full confidence in His presence; the blood of Christ is His answer to every question of our acceptance or attack of the enemy. In the power of the blood of Christ, with uncondemning hearts, we abide in that Presence before whom all is manifest. God Himself is our refuge and our confidence; by His grace we are those who keep His commandments and practise the things pleasing to Him. We are those who believe "on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another," and whose petitions are in accordance with Him in whom we are accepted. We abide in God and He abides in us (1 John 3:21-24). A marvelous blessing this, a wonderful privilege: abiding in God and God abiding in us! We are in the community of life and nature, after the pattern of that declared by our Lord when He said, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 14:10-11). Just as He abode in the Father and the Father in Him, so also we abide in Him and He in us. By the Spirit which now dwells in us we are able to realize and enjoy the portion that is ours. Characteristically speaking (as John constantly does), in this dispensation of the Spirit the children of God are qualified to enjoy the intimacies of their relationship with God. They find their power for this in the Spirit dwelling in them.

## 02.07 1Jn\_4:1-7.

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1 John 4:1-7. In the New Testament we have the full revelation of God, and in connection with this revelation is unfolded to the children of God the nature and practical character of their relationship with God. It is by the Holy Spirit come down from heaven that this knowledge is given them. In Old Testament times God's children were marked by the practice of righteousness and loving one another. The divine life in them was thus exercised; but they were not told or taught these things; they were not even told they possessed this life eternal; its practical character was never unfolded to them, therefore.

Thus those born from above in Old Testament times never were able to say, "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." The revelation in which such knowledge is found was not given them. They could not be in the conscious enjoyment of what had not been revealed to them; the Spirit that reveals it to us had not come to them. When the Spirit came, He gave the children of God not only the revelation that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but also what is the nature and character of the relationship into which new birth brings us. Hence we are able to say, "We know that He abideth in us." It is by the Spirit bestowed upon us that we know it — as in 1 John 3:24. But there are many false prophets who have gone out into the world claiming to be speaking by the Holy Spirit. In every age since the apostolic times, various systems of teachings have been urged upon the people of God. They are usually antichristian in character. They are usually commended as a perfecting of, or progress beyond, the Christian revelation. Their propagators claim to be taught by the Spirit of God. It becomes necessary therefore to test the teaching we are invited to receive. Our apostle warns against believing every spirit; he exhorts us to try them, to see whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). He gives us also the infallible tests by which to try the claims or pretensions of all who profess to speak for God. And what are these tests? He gives us two sure rules by which we may judge whether a teacher or prophet is bringing the truth of God. If John tells us not to believe every spirit, he means that we must not accept as true the profession one may make that he is speaking by the Spirit; and if he says, "Try the spirits whether they are of God," he would have us realize there is an absolutely sure way of detecting false claims, and exposing the pretensions of those who are assuming to be what they are not. His first test is: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh, is of God" (1 John 4:2). If we apply this test to Christianity as apostolically established, it proves itself to be of God. In the "faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3), Jesus Christ come in flesh is fully acknowledged. He is the very centre of the system of teaching which the apostles promulgated. The "form of doctrine" which they delivered gives Christ His true place. In the form of "sound words," of which they were the human instruments to communicate to the Church of God, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate One, is honored and exalted. Jesus Christ come in flesh is everywhere confessed in the New Testament Scriptures, and this one fact is evidence that they are of God. It is the proof that the Spirit of God has given them. The Christian revelation meets fully the test of the apostle. It is evident that the New Testament writings are a system of teaching which the very brightest human intellect could not have conceived. The Spirit of God is

their true author. They are a revelation of things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived." They are a revelation from God by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-10), and the great proof of it is that everywhere they confess Jesus Christ come in flesh.

We should be reminded here it is not merely to confess that Jesus Christ did come in flesh; the idea of the verse in the original is the confession of Himself, the acknowledgment of who and what the Incarnate One is — the bowing of will and heart to Him — confessing the claims and rights of the Incarnate One. Now this, we may say, is the distinguishing characteristic of the New Testament writings. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, is everywhere the theme: His rights, His claims, His honor, His glory are, not simply recognized, but owned. Christianity, or what we call the Christian revelation, stands the apostle's test. It is a divine system in which God speaks by His Spirit. No other system of teaching meets the test. Every other form of teaching betrays its human, or perhaps in some cases, Satanic origin. Very high claims may be made: it may be professed that God is the source of what is being taught, that by His Spirit He is addressing Himself to men, while yet Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God is in various ways dishonored — in many cases even denied. His claims are not owned and submitted to; His rights are ignored and even refused. There are systems of teaching in which He is wickedly degraded and blasphemed.

Such systems of teaching are not of the Holy Spirit: another spirit is at work in them. Our apostle tells us that every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus Christ, the Incarnate One, is not of God, but is the spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:3). The New Testament apostles and prophets warned the people of God that this spirit of antichrist would come. John, the last of them, now tells them that it has already come. It is not that the Antichrist himself has come, but that many have come who are characterized by his spirit — the spirit of insubjection to the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. We are justified, therefore, in rejecting as not of God, every system of teaching in which Jesus Christ come in flesh is disowned or dishonored. The family are now assured that they are of God. The apostle would have them know that he is not implying that any of them are of the false spirit concerning whom he is warning them. Nay, the Spirit of God is dwelling in them; He is greater than that which animates the false teachers that have gone out into the world; and, indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit, God's children have the victory over those of the antichristian spirit.

These antichristian prophets and teachers are of the world; they speak according to the world; therefore, the world hears them. The natural man receives not the things spoken by the Spirit and deposited in the Scriptures for the children of God. They that are of the world are not subject to the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, come in flesh. But some one may say, This test was for apostolic times, to distinguish between the divinely-called apostles and impostors. But how are we to test those who have risen up as teachers since the departure of the apostles? How can we determine which of the many conflicting voices is really the voice of God? The difficulty as to this is not so great as it seems. The apostle provides us with a sure test of the reality of all that professes to be of God. He shows us there is a spirit of truth and a spirit of error, and puts in our hands the means of distinguishing them. To test and decide upon the claims of those who profess to speak by the Spirit of God is thus very simple.

Let us turn to the rule he has given by which we are to know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Notice that in the first place he insists on the divine origin of the apostolic mission. He says, "We are of God;" which means that those in apostolic times who had introduced and established

Christianity had done it by the authority of God; that by divine sanction, by the Spirit of God, they had given the faith its permanent form — the form in which it was to be handed down to succeeding generations. John teaches that the New Testament Scriptures are given to us by the Spirit of God, and to be held as such. If we speak of teachers, since the days of the apostles, we need ask but one question: Do they hear the apostles and prophets who by the Holy Spirit have given us the New Testament Scriptures? John says: "He that knoweth God heareth us" (1 John 4:6). The way to know whether a teacher or prophet is of God, therefore, is by the teaching he brings. Does he teach apostolic doctrine and practice? Whatever his claim may be, if he does not do this he has no claim to be received as sent of God.

All atheistic, pantheistic, and materialistic teachings are marked by the spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh. The many systems of so-called Christian philosophy, antagonistic to the faith proclaimed in the Scriptures, are excluded from the fellowship or support of the children of God. Unitarianism, as degrading the incarnate Son of God, is manifestly shown not to be of God. Universalism, as denying a part of apostolic teaching, is clearly not of the Spirit. In the same way Millennial Dawnism, Christadelphianism, and all kindred systems, are by our apostle's rules shown to be of the spirit of antichrist. Christian Science, Mormonism, Spiritualism, are stamped as anti-christian. The many so-called holiness and pentecostal movements fail to meet the test which John admonishes us to apply to them. Even many schools of thought existing among those who are undoubtedly to be recognized as Christian people, as for instance, the various unapostolic conceptions of the nature and character of the gospel, cannot establish their claim upon the confidence of the children of God. But we need not enlarge on these lines. It needs not to enumerate all the systems of human or even Satanic origin; the great thing is that the apostle has given us infallible rules by which to detect what is of God and what is not — what is by the Spirit of God and what lacks the mark of His approval. May we faithfully employ the rules of the apostle, and thus preserve ourselves from complicity with, and support of, what has not the endorsement of the Holy Spirit. May we remember it is by the Spirit that we have right knowledge. It is in what He has given in the New Testament Scriptures that we have the knowledge of our blessings from God and of the relationship in which we stand to God and its practical character. It is as having the Christian revelation — the common possession of all saints in this dispensation — that we have the knowledge which enables us to say, We dwell in God and God dwells in us.

## 02.08 1Jn\_4:7-19.

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1 John 4:7-19.

We have already noticed that the apostle regards loving the brethren as one of the marks of those who are "born of God." It is one of the ways in which the divine life in us makes its presence manifest. But it is not enough to know that we are children of God and have passed from death to life; that in virtue of this new life and nature we dwell in God and He in us; that this knowledge is not a mere fancy of our mind, but an authoritative revelation, we need to understand the character of God's love: that if God dwells in us it is in perfect love; and if we realize it not, it means that we are not perfected in His love, which is perfect in itself. If the portion of the epistle we are now to look at communicates such knowledge, it demands our undivided attention. In taking up afresh the theme of love's activity, the apostle begins by exhorting to it. He says: "Beloved, let us love one another" (1 John 4:7). He would have us exercise ourselves in the nature we have received from God. Instead of cultivating the old nature, he would have us cultivate the new. Instead of developing the life natural to us, we should develop the life divinely communicated to us. And, let us notice, the love which our apostle exhorts us to practise ourselves in is the love which is of God — not mere human or natural love, but of the new nature, which we have as born of God. New birth confers a new relationship with God, a relationship in which God is definitely before the soul, whatever the measure in which this is realized or enjoyed. Every one therefore who loves, who practises the love that is of God, is born of God and knows God; while every one in whom this activity of love does not exist at all, does not know God — is not in this new relationship with God (1 John 4:8).

Love in God is active — He loves. Those who are born of Him have in them His active nature. He is love, and therefore loves. They love therefore because He loves. In saying this, I am not forgetting the hindrances in us to the manifestations of love. In God, love is unclouded. Alas, how clouded it is in us! Yet, even so, love's activity in us is of the same kind as it is in God. While it differs (how much!) in degree, it is the same in kind.

Now the activity of love in God has been manifested in our behalf. God has shown it in sending His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9). As naturally born, we are under sentence of death: we are appointed to death (Hebrews 9:27), which implies abandonment to an eternal doom. To what wrath we are thus subject in our life of alienation from God! But God is love. In sending His only-begotten Son into the world He has manifested the activity of His love in providing a way for us to pass out of death into life. In the activity of His love, He gives us a new life. The incarnate Son of God put Himself under our sentence. Appointed to death as we were, with judgment coming after death, He made for us a way out of that position and condition into a new position and condition in which we are no more subjects of death and judgment, but of life in community with God.

Thus we have life through Christ the Son of God. He is the source and channel of eternal life to us. By Him we pass out of death into life — out of alienation from God into community with Him. God

had this in view in sending His Son into the world. What activity, what display of love!

It should be remembered that this activity of love in God was manifested toward us "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8). We shall fail to apprehend the true character of God's love if we forget this. His motive for loving was entirely in Himself, not in those towards whom He has shown His love. In loving, God is but acting Himself out, acting according to His own nature — manifesting Himself, manifesting what His motive is, showing the object or end He has in view. As desiring to take us out of death into life, He sent His only-begotten Son into the world in order to accomplish His desire: He has thus revealed His nature as active in love.

Another thing also needs to be remembered if we are to apprehend the full character of the love of God. To accomplish His purpose, to attain the end He had in view, to secure the desire of His heart, He sent the very best He possessed — His only Son. This is the measure of the love of God. His Son stands to Him in a relationship immeasurably dear — His priceless Treasure; but God willingly sent Him into the world that we might live through Him!

God having thus manifested the love that is in Himself, we are enabled to know it, and in what it consists. This the apostle does in saying, "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son a propitiation concerning our sins." The apostle thus guards us against making the love of God consist in our love of Him. Our love of Him is the fruit of His love. It is not natural to us; it is produced in us. A power outside of ourselves has acted upon us and caused in us love for God. But love in God was not caused by something without Himself: it is in Him abidingly; it is His nature. The motive to love is in Himself. To contrast love in God and in us, as I have been doing, is to emphasize the difference — an essential one.

It would be a serious mistake, therefore, to say the love of God consists in our love of Him. It would falsify its character. Thus we understand the apostle's earnestness in guarding us against so serious a mistake. "Not that we loved God," he says, "but that He loved us." But it is not sufficient, however, to say that God is love and that He loved us; it is important that the holiness of the love of God be safeguarded. It must not be thought that because God is love, sins are of small account in His eyes. If we say, God loves men, it must not be understood as implying that He overlooks their sins. That would be falsifying His character. Sin is abhorrent to Him. He cannot behold iniquity. His eyes are too pure for that (Habakkuk 1:13). As antagonistic to His nature, an infringement on His sovereign rights, He cannot possibly tolerate sin. But how can God's love to men and His hatred of sin be harmonized? How can He maintain the holiness of His love? If He loves us, does He not violate holiness and righteousness? Such questions show the need of a fuller statement. The character of God in His love to us must be expressed: hence in saying, "Not that we loved God but that He loved us," the apostle adds, "And sent His Son [to make] propitiation for our sins." The character of love in God is thus fully safeguarded. For, seeking man, seeking to win men from their sins is very different from visiting upon them the due of their sins. In seeking to reconcile men to Himself, it involved atonement, therefore. While it is important to insist on this, the great point in the statement we are considering is God's propitious attitude toward men in sending "His only Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The very act of sending His Son for this purpose was the wonderful display of God's gracious attitude toward men. It was the love of God exercised in consistency with holiness and righteousness. It was Love operating in its sovereign rights, and in harmony with His hatred of sin.

Such then is the nature and character of love in God. What human mind could have conceived of love like this? How could we know it unless it were revealed? Being revealed, it is known and enjoyed by the children of God as infinite and eternal, as having foreordained the Lamb before the foundation of the world as a sacrifice for sin.

If such is the nature and character of love in God, if He loves in such a fashion as we have been contemplating, it is fitting that we should love one another (1 John 4:11). In saying, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another," we must not understand the apostle to be teaching that loving one another is a mere duty. Duty it surely is; but that is not the spirit of the love which the apostle exhorts us to exercise. He urges us to a love patterned after that which we see in God. "We ought also to love one another," means, then, the exercise of that divine life we have received — the practice of it toward one another. The measure in which we fail in this is the measure in which we fail to manifest the divine bond in the family of God.

What a bond! how precious a tie! One in which we are first of all in community with God Himself, and necessarily share with all who are the objects of His love. As in one bundle of life, they are necessarily dear to us, and we ought even to lay down our lives for them.

We now pass on to other subjects in this section. It will be remembered that in John 1:18 it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time." That statement is repeated here, but not for the same reason or purpose. There, it is in connection with the revelation of God. No one has ever seen God to be qualified thus to witness to what He is — only the Son who has come from the bosom of the Father, who has personal knowledge of God, is personally acquainted with the perfections of His nature and character; He is thus a competent witness; He speaks what He personally knows — what He has seen and heard (John 3:32).

Here, in 1 John 4:12, the apostle is not thinking of the Son of the Father testifying among men to what God is, but of God being manifested in His children. The children of God, loving one another, are displaying in their measure the love that is in God. "No one has seen God at any time," but if we love one another that is a display of Him. The moral nature of God is in us. This, as we have already seen, is an active nature. If it is present at all in a man, it is present in activity. Since it is the moral nature of God, it is proper to say God is dwelling in us. God dwells in us by a nature and life from Himself. It is His love that is in us. In loving one another, that love is having its normal activity in us. This is what is meant by the expression, "And His love is perfected in us." The apostle is not speaking here of some advanced Christians, as if there were a class of believers of whom it is not true that the love of God is perfected in them. He is speaking abstractly, as he so commonly does. He is speaking of what is characteristic. He is not thinking of degrees and measures, but of what is normally and characteristically true, and marks every child of God. It is as loving one another that the children of God manifest themselves as those in whom God dwells — in whom the love of God is in activity.

If then we are marked by loving one another, God has given us "of His Spirit." He has given us a nature which is of His Spirit. We are born of the Spirit. By this nature God dwells in us and we in Him; and it gives capacity to recognize those on whom it has been conferred. By this activity of love we realize our dwelling in God, and His dwelling in us (1 John 4:13).

Along with this communicated nature there is the apostolic testimony that "the Father sent the Son, the Saviour of the world." They had seen the Son manifested upon earth as having the glory of an only-begotten of the Father. Their contemplation of it had wrought in them a divine conviction. If "no one has seen God at any time," they personally were witnesses that the Father sent the Son; they could say, "We have seen, and do testify." The world has refused Him who was sent to save it. It has rejected its Saviour, but the fact that the Father sent the Son to save the world may be appealed to as a manifestation of the love of God. If no man has ever seen Him, His love has been manifested. It cannot be said, No one has ever seen His love. Multitudes have seen it and live in it. All who have received the Saviour whom the Father sent, dwell in the love of God. Every one who inwardly submits to Jesus as being truly the Son of God, lives in the love of God. All such are born of God. A new life, a moral principle, is begotten in their souls in the power of the Spirit, by which God dwells in them and they in God (1 John 4:15). It is the characteristic fact, true of every one who in reality confesses Jesus as the Son of God. The degree of individual realization is quite another matter; the apostle is not speaking of this here.

Loving one another, then, characterizes, more or less, all the family of God, and gives capacity to know or recognize one another. Undoubtedly there are hindrances in all to any full capacity for this. The great point urged by the apostle is that we have received a common life from the Spirit, and with it a full and reliable testimony to the love of God by personal witnesses of its manifestation. Those therefore who have become participators in this life through faith in Jesus, are those who know and believe the love God has to us. God is love; they are in community with Him; they dwell in God and God in them (1 John 4:16). But while love may be in us, in a nature perfect in itself, yet it is quite another thing to be perfect in our apprehension of it. It is of immense comfort to be assured, as the word of God does assure us, that in new birth we have received a new and perfect nature — received eternal life, which abides for ever — an imperishable life indeed! Many who believe this do not realize that it stamps us as being already (even while still here in this world) as Christ is. If the day of judgment causes fear, love (the apprehension of it) is not perfect with them.

There is need to consider well the apostle's words, and to weigh them. First, let us notice a defect in our ordinary translation. 1 John 4:17 reads: "Herein is our love made perfect." Now our love, our response to the love of God, is never perfect. It is never what it should be. To say it is, would be very pretentious. No child of God, unless under some deceptive influence, would claim that his love for God is perfect. In marginal Bibles this very serious defect of translation is corrected. They give "Love with us," instead of "our love." We should read, then, "Herein is love with us made perfect," which gives an entirely different sense. It is evident the apostle is not thinking of our love of God, but of the love which God has manifested.

Again, if the apostle speaks of the love of God being made perfect with us, it is plain he speaks of our apprehension of it. What is meant by this is what we must now consider.

Clearly it does not express the same thought as when we say, We are the objects of God's love. It is a great thing to know that. But many know this, heartily believe it, yet manifestly have not been made perfect in love. Love, in the perfection of its nature, is in them as we have seen; yet it has not been made perfect with them; the apprehension of what it is needs perfecting. The apostle, speaking of the day of judgment, says: "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have

boldness in respect of the day of judgment." (The Greek preposition *en* often has the sense of "in respect of," "in view of." I so translate it here.) Have we "boldness" — peace, rest of heart — in view of the day of judgment? If so, then, according to the apostle, love has been perfected with us. But if this is lacking, if there is timidity in our souls as we think of that day, there is a defect in our apprehension of the Love that dwells in us. What then is the defect? The answer to this question is found in what immediately follows: "Because as He is, so are we in this world." This is what is not realized where boldness in respect to the day of judgment is wanting. The thought in the minds of many is that they are to be made as He is, not that they already are as He is. How many a child of God shrinks from believing that now, in this world, he is as Christ is!

It is said, We are not where He is yet. Our bodies have not yet been changed and fashioned after His body of glory. Quite true; we are still in the body suited to this life — not yet in a body suited to heaven. Our present body is a sinful and mortal body. But the apostle is not thinking of the body; he is not occupying us with the thought of physical likeness to Christ. If he were, he would not say: "As He is, so are we in this world." We shall be physically like Him when we are changed into His likeness, but until then our body continues to be a natural body. In what sense then are we now as He is? Let us remember that the apostle is looking at the children of God as characterized by community of life with God. From that point of view, the thing that is true in Christ is true also in them. They are one with Him in the new nature given them — one with Him in life. The apostle thinks of us as identified in nature and life with Christ. As having the same nature with Him, we are as He is. As having community of life with Himself, we are already what we shall be in the day of judgment. Christ is not, cannot be, an object of judgment. As children of God, neither are we objects of judgment. The apprehension of this blessed truth, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is what the apostle calls "Love perfected in us."

## 02.09 1Jn\_4:20 to 1Jn\_5:13.

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1 John 4:20-21; 1 John 5:1-13 The apostle proceeds now to expose the pretensions and claims of those who seek to be recognized as being children of God, though lacking the marks by which such are distinguished. One may say, "I love God." He is claiming to know God, to know the love that is of God. We have seen that love in God is active. His love pours out, so to speak, on the objects of His love. One who says he loves God professes therefore to participate in the activities of that love which must, in some measure, be present in every one who loves God. Instead of this the false professor shows hatred to those whom, by his profession, he is bound to acknowledge as his brethren. The apostle uses a strong term as to such: he says, "He is a liar" (1 John 4:20). In speaking of hating his brother, the apostle is not thinking of some sudden, provoked, or unprovoked, outburst of temper, though we may be sure he would not excuse this, but would unhesitatingly call it sin: it is an interruption, for the time, of the flow of communion between the Father and His child. But the apostle is not treating of that subject here. He is speaking of what we may call the uniform activity or state of the soul, its continuous habit. One characterized by hatred of God's children speaks falsely in saying that he loves God. He does not know God, is not dwelling in love. But the apostle not only denounces such an one as "a liar," making a false profession, but he would have us realize the utter impossibility of that profession being true. "No one has ever seen God at any time," he says; God is invisible; and how can one that does not love the children of God whom he sees, love their Father whom he does not see? It is put in the form of a question only to add force in the conscience that it is impossible — the profession is not true.

There is another consideration to be mentioned. We have received a commandment from the Lord to love one another (John 13:34). By obedience to this injunction we prove ourselves to be His true disciples, and make manifest that we are His "friends." Every one who professes to love God professes to obey Him; but hating one's brother is not obedience. Obligation to love rests on every child of God; but it is not met by mere profession. Obedience to Him who is the source of love in His children is the mark by which it is shown to be in us (1 John 4:21).

Another mark of the children of God is the reception of Jesus as the Christ. One may not have much knowledge, may not be able to tell the blessings that are the heritage of the children of God, but bowing the knee to Jesus, his soul submitting to Him as the Christ of God, marks the true child of God. Being thus manifested as born of God, such are embraced by us as objects of love. It is true that many of their natural characteristics may still be seen in them. As long as we remain in the natural body we must expect it, but the spiritual tie is a stronger and dearer tie than the natural one. These natural characteristics cannot obliterate the spiritual tie. Even the failures which we see in one another cannot annul it. They may call forth grief, pity, even stern rebuke, but the tie remains unchangeable, and its preciousness abides. The love that is from God dwelling in us cannot be selective as regards the objects it embraces. To love in community with God is to embrace all the objects of His love. He loves every child as a child. Even though it may be at times disobedient, needing correction, and severe discipline may have to be administered, yet the tie, that through His grace has been established, abides, and is precious with Him. God loves His

children with an abiding and unchangeable love. If then we have learned from Him what love is, and love in community with Him, then the objects of His love are the objects of love in us. We love the children of God as that — love every one who has received Jesus as the Christ.

Again, loving in community with the Father implies that we love for the Father's sake, that is, because they are His children. We would not be true to Him if we did not; our love would not reflect His. This is surely implied in "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him." It means that we entertain His thoughts toward His children. But this does not imply indifference to wrong conduct, disobedience, or fellowshiping evil ways. The apostle carefully guards the true character of love here. Love according to God must be of the right quality. Hence we read, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments" (1 John 5:2). Our love to one another is not true love unless it is defined and limited by love to God, which is proved by submission to His will — obedience to His injunctions or instructions. In verse 3 the apostle insists that obedience is the mark of loving God. We show our love to Him, not by professing it merely, but by unfeignedly governing ourselves by His instructions; they are by no means irksome if we truly love God. In 1 John 5:4-5, another mark of a child of God is given. The true love of God, which is in His children, overcomes the world. The world is alienated from God, is in enmity to Him. The manifestation and proof of this is its rejection of the Son of God when He came into it. It did not recognize Jesus as the Lord of glory. It refused all testimony that He was the Son of God. His presence troubled the world. His teachings and His testimony that He came from the Father were resisted and contradicted. His works of power were ascribed to the devil. His continuance here could not be tolerated, and they nailed Him to a cross, between thieves. And the world has not reversed its judgment of Jesus. It still denies Him His rights. It is a great triumph over the world whenever an individual reverses the world's judgment of Jesus. Through the power of His love, individuals have, and still do, bow the knee to Him — owning Jesus as Lord of all. A mighty victory this! But who are these victors — these overcomers of the world? Are they the adherents of humanitarian movements? the disciples of human philosophies? the promulgators of world-reform movements? No; these things, whatever the outward effects produced, leave the hearts of men unchanged, heralded though they be as great victories. Victories over certain forms of evil in the world they may be, but not victories over the world.

Children of God alone are overcomers of the world — those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Faith, faith in Him which sets its seal that the divine testimony to Him is true, is the real victory. What a triumph of the truth it is when a soul steps out of the ranks of unbelievers, out from among rejectors of Christ, and takes its place in the ranks of those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God! "This is the victory that overcometh the world — our faith."

I must notice here an idea which some have urged, in a mistaken way putting 1 John 5:1 and 1 John 5:5 in contrast. It has been stated that the faith which confesses that Jesus is the Christ is a lower faith than that which acknowledges Him to be the Son of God. But the Spirit of God makes no such contrast here. The idea cannot be justly drawn from the apostle's argument. The two things, in fact, go together: believing that Jesus is the Christ, and believing that He is the Son of God. It is not a question of the measure of intelligence in either case. Nathanael in John 1:1-51, acknowledges Jesus to be the King of Israel because he is divinely convinced He is the Son of God. Martha, in John 11:1-57, says, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which

should come into the world," expressing thus the faith of those who inwardly, divinely, received the Old Testament Scriptures. Peter's confession, in Matthew 16:16, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," is the expression of the faith of those who through the gracious activities of the Spirit in their souls hearkened to the voice of the Father as He had spoken in the Old Testament writings.

These illustrations (with others which might be cited) make it plain that, as already said, believing in Jesus as Messiah and believing in Him as Son of God, go together. There may have been indeed lack in distinguishing; there may have been much misapprehension as to both titles. The full truth connected with them could hardly then be realized. The faith that was in them as a germ was to be expanded later, but in that germ there were both conceptions of the Lord. Their divinely given faith owned Him to be both Messiah and the Son of God. What victors they were over the leaders and teachers who, assuming the seat of Moses, were not obeying Moses! — who instead of listening to Him of whom Moses wrote, rejected Him and did everything in their power to hinder others from receiving Him. The faith that triumphed then is the faith that triumphs now. Those who now are the overcomers of the world are those who set to their seal that the testimony of God concerning Jesus is true. In receiving Jesus as the Son of God, the believer, as we have seen, is simply building on God's own testimony. We may now inquire, What is the testimony of God on which faith rests in unshaken confidence? In Old Testament times God had made promises. Faith believed God and waited for the promise. But we are not waiting for the promised Seed of the woman, or the Seed of Abraham, or the Heir of David: this now would be rank unbelief. Faith now manifests itself in receiving Jesus as the Son of God. Faith affirms and maintains that He who came in the world 1900 years ago, whose personal name was Jesus, is the Son of God. God has in a most remarkable way given testimony concerning Him. The testimony is threefold: the water and the blood that flowed from Jesus' pierced side, after His death, and the Spirit that came down from heaven after He had risen and ascended back to glory. But we must consider this more carefully; and in doing so we must first give a better translation than the one in our ordinary version. 1 John 5:6-8 should be read: "This is He that came in the way of water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the power of the water only, but in the power of the water and the blood; and it is the Spirit that testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. Because there are three that testify: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three are with a view to one [testimony]."

"This is He that came in the way of water and blood" — what does the apostle refer to here? The first has been referred to the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist: but there was neither cleansing for man nor expiation for God in the baptism of Jesus; therefore the Spirit cannot have this in mind here. The same objection applies if it be thought the reference is to the birth of the Lord Jesus into the world. The Lord's own statement, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" (John 12:24), should be sufficient to settle all controversy as to whether there was cleansing for man or propitiation for God in either the birth of our Lord or His baptism. It is evident the apostle is occupied here, not with the fact simply that the Son of God became man, but with God's purpose, the great object that was in view in the coming of Jesus. Coming to be a Saviour (1 John 4:14) involved His death, because men were under the sentence of death — a righteous sentence, which therefore could not be set aside. The only possible way of effecting a deliverance from it was by the Substitute assuming the sentence, and providing a new life for men — a life beyond the death and the judgment to which men are appointed. Those upon whom this new life is

conferred become new creatures. They are thus clean creatures, having been born from above — of water and the Spirit. Their new birth, for which the death and resurrection of Christ is provision, is their cleansing: in the words of Romans 5:18, it is a "justification of life." The Son of God in this manner provides cleansing for men defiled by sin. This cleansing from sin, we must remember, is not at the expense of the glory of God. That death, which is the means of life to us, has fully met every demand of the nature and character of God. It is a perfect satisfaction to God's nature. This expiation is fully acceptable to Him; it is a propitiation that vindicates God in every way; it leaves no stain on His glory; the throne of government is untarnished. Our acceptance is in no way inconsistent with the nature and character of Him who cannot look upon sin. In our salvation He has not winked at our sins. His grace to us is in full harmony with His holiness and righteousness. The Son of God, then, came in the way of cleansing and propitiation. This is the apostle's thought when he says, "This is He that came in the way of water and blood" (water being the symbol of cleansing, and blood the sign of propitiation), laying down His life in vindication of the character and glory of God. But the apostle adds, "Not in the power of the water only, but in the power of the blood." Why does he now use a different preposition — the Greek *en*, instead of *dia*? — "in the power of" instead of "in the way of?" "In the way of" indicates the way or means. Moral cleansing for men and perfect satisfaction for God is the only suited method of dealing with men in the condition in which they are through sin; but it is not only a suited method, it is thoroughly adequate; it is the only effective way of meeting man's need. In coming to provide cleansing and expiation, the Son of God has interposed in man's behalf with what is fully efficacious; hence the added expression, "Not in the power of the water only, but in the power of the blood." The death of Christ provides both, and both effectively; so that the soul that comes under the power of the cleansing Word, symbolized by the water, is turned to God to stand before His face with the assurance that he is made fit for His presence, having been made whiter than snow by the blood — the sign of propitiation accomplished, which means the unqualified acceptance of the one who believes and confesses Jesus to be the Son of God.

Having thus spoken of the water and the blood, the apostle adds, "And it is the Spirit that testifies, because the Spirit is the truth." He plainly refers to the water and the blood which came out of the pierced side of the dead body of Christ, as a divine testimony which God gave concerning His Son. It was not a natural phenomenon, but a supernatural one (see John 19:35), by which God was testifying that the death of His Son provides cleansing, or a new life, and propitiation. In recording the pouring forth of blood and water from the pierced side of Christ after death, John adds, "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true." The Spirit by John thus attests and confirms the testimony of the blood and the water.

There are, then, three witnesses: the water, the blood, and the Spirit — a threefold testimony; but a united testimony, and thus one. The Spirit and the water and the blood affirm the same thing. They unite in witnessing that life is in the Son and for men through His death. They bear their united testimony to the truth, to produce faith: — "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Son of God." In the epistle, however, John is writing to believers, and he urges that the testimony he has been speaking of is divine testimony — the testimony of God concerning His Son (1 John 5:9). The believer needs to have the sense of this in his soul. The power and enjoyment of the blessing that is his as a believer will be much affected by the consciousness, or lack of it, that the testimony is Divine. If it has been received only as the word of men, it will not have its full sanctifying power

in the soul. We receive the testimony of competent, trustworthy men without question; but how much greater is the testimony of God! He speaks what He knows; with Him knowledge is absolute, not relative. He witnesses to the truth as He alone fully knows it. But again, what is the apostle occupying us with here? To what end is God so emphatically and solemnly testifying? It is this: Life, eternal life, is in the incarnate Son of God, and through faith is communicated to the believer on the basis of His death (1 John 5:11).

Perhaps this statement requires to be expanded, and guarded against misunderstanding. Let the reader specially notice this: Life is in the incarnate Son of God; and this form of expression is more important than at first appears necessary. But it must be remembered that men have forfeited their life in Adam, and it is a question of a new life in man, a life of such a nature and character that the recipients become by the very fact, not merely new creatures, but children of God: for those born of God, born from above, are in a higher and more intimate relation to God than Adam was, even as unfallen. But how could this be? Only through a new Adam. The Son of God became incarnate in order to be this new Man. Now if we think of Him as incarnate, He was a Man who had life in a double sense. Being a divine Person He had divine life. Having become a human Person He had human life. He had thus both divine and human life; but, be it remembered, not two lives (one divine and the other human), but one life which was both divine and human. He was thus a unique Man.

Now keeping this in mind we can understand that He was a Man who had both uncommunicated and communicated life — both independent and dependent life, i.e., one life having both characteristics. John 5:26 shows this plainly. While as an eternal Person He has eternal, divine life, as become Man, as incarnate, He has life as given Him, i.e., as a communication. Mark, too, it is given or communicated to be in Himself. It is intrinsic and essential to Himself. We therefore may speak of Him as having divine, or eternal life in a dependent form. But even so He was alone in it. He, alone, had it intrinsically. It was in Him alone essentially. He had to fall into the ground and die as the corn of wheat to provide a basis for its communication to others. His death — a death in behalf of men — procures life for men to be received by faith. His death is God's justification in giving life to believers at any time — Old Testament times or New.

It should be manifest that the form of the life that is communicated to believers is the form of life possessed by Him as incarnate — a form of life assumed by Him in order to be the Source of life to us. Dying and rising again He abides, a Man still having both uncommunicated and communicated life. The testimony of God concerning His Son is, as we have seen, to the effect that eternal life is communicated to us — believers. This communicated life, life in dependence, is in Him. He is the fountain-source of it. It is not life as He possessed it eternally — independent life; it is life as He possesses it as Man; but a life having, even in us, the twofold character it has in Him; a life in which we are men still, yet the children of God also.

Now the believer characteristically has this witness of God in himself (1 John 5:10). The testimony of God received produces in the soul divine conviction of the truth. He may not be able to unfold or explain all that goes with it, but there is an inward sense of being connected with Jesus the Son of God, and that thus he is in relationship with God. The unbeliever, by his disbelief of the testimony, charges God with lying. What a dreadful thing! What bold effrontery on the part of those who refuse the united testimony of the water, the blood, and the Spirit! How sinful to treat their

testimony as being false! To charge Him who cannot lie with lying, in giving testimony concerning His Son by means of these three supernatural witnesses, is audacious!

Now, let us mark again, this testimony of God concerning His Son is not only that Jesus is His Son and that life is in Him intrinsically and essentially, but that it is communicated to us — to believers (1 John 5:11). God has given to us the life that is in the Fountain-head. We have it in ourselves, but not as intrinsic to us. It is in us a communicated life in dependence upon the source from which we receive it. If we have it, it is as in Him who became Man to die, and thus to become the source of it to others: as the apostle says, "He that hath the Son hath the life" (1 John 5:12).

If then the life is in Him, if the incarnate Son of God dead and risen is the source of life, and if only those who believe on Him are the recipients of it, then whoever does not have the Son does not have the life. To all this the apostle adds, "These things have I written in order that you may know that you have eternal life — you who believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). Believers now are given the full knowledge of the truth, which could not be given before the incarnation and death of the Son of God. However truly God acted anticipatively in Old Testament times in conferring the life on believers before the incarnation and death of the Son of God, He did not give them the testimony that He has now given to us. The full truth of our relations to God is now given. The revelation of it has been authoritatively communicated, not simply that we may know we have the life, but that we may enjoy, appreciate, and live in the power of it. The measure of our enjoyment, of course, depends on the measure in which the power of that revelation dwells in us. Perhaps I should say, on the measure of our receptivity. This conscious enjoyment and appreciation of the life given us is characteristically true now of all who have the life. There may be inward realization and true enjoyment where there is not that full intelligence which a divine conviction of the testimony produces in the soul — a sense of being in relationship with God. However weak his faith, the believer knows he has eternal life.

## 02.10 1Jn\_5:14-21.

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1 John 5:14-21.

We must now look at the apostle's concluding remarks. Viewing the family of God as in the enjoyment of the revelation concerning the divine life in them, he goes on to speak of the confidence that is to characterize them. To have the sense of fellowship with God — fellowship with the Father and the Son — even in the feeblest measure, is a great blessing. Confidence in Him, who is the source of blessing, is an accompaniment of the realization that we possess life eternal. To know God, inwardly to enjoy Him in any measure, gives freedom to ask of Him according to His will. The more fully He is known, the more deeply He is enjoyed, the greater will be our freedom to ask for what we know is according to His will — for what we are conscious suits His nature and character. Up to the measure of our enjoyed sense of what He is, so far shall we ask in unrestrained liberty. We shall ask with confidence, because consciously asking according to His will. And if conscious that we ask according to His will, we are conscious of having His ear; we know we are heard, and that our petitions are granted (1 John 5:15). That there is much asking which is not according to God's will I fully grant; but our failure and inconsistency in no wise alter the fact that "if we ask anything according to his will, He heareth us." We must remember that the apostle is speaking here characteristically, as he so constantly does throughout the epistle. For faith, God is now in the light, not in the darkness, as under the law: He has revealed Himself, He is known. This is characteristic of our dispensation. The power of the revelation in the soul is another matter; but the apostle is not treating of that here. He is speaking of what is normally true — true to some extent of every one belonging to the family of God now. When he says, "This is the confidence that we have in him," the "we" is not a special and privileged class in the family, but the family as such. Boldness in asking according to the will of God is a characteristic of the family. It is a family privilege which we all need to learn and avail ourselves of more freely. In this boldness of presenting our requests to God, in drawing near to Him, we are at liberty to pray for one another; we may embrace in our requests the objects of our love. Loving Him who begets, we love those begotten of Him; they will necessarily be subjects of our petitions. We shall have sympathy for those in trial, will be interested in those who are in adverse circumstances. Their sorrows will appeal to us as well as their joys. We shall think of, and intercede for them in times of failure, and sin, and when under the Father's discipline, who corrects His child that he may be partaker of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10). How acceptable to God are such sympathies and requests according to His will. He delights to hear and to answer them.

What sweet and blessed privileges! What a precious thing is this drawing near to God to make requests for one another! Do we value the privilege as we ought?

There is one limitation (1 John 5:16); and we must look at it. The apostle tells us there is such a thing as sinning unto death. The question has been asked, "What is the sin unto death?" Some have supposed it to be some specific or particular sin. It is a misapprehension, however. But it is sinning under such circumstances that holiness and righteousness require that the one guilty of it

should be cut off by death. It is a most serious thing so to outrage the government of God that it must vindicate itself. For warning to others, for the good of all, the outrage must be marked with God's judgment here upon earth. The cutting off of the offender is necessary to the maintenance of the dignity and character of God's government. Even repentance does not sufficiently satisfy the claims of a holy and righteous government. In such a case, Christian sentiment, based as it is on what is due to the glory of God, would feel that it is antagonizing the rights of divine government to plead for any relaxation of the penalty incurred. Hence the apostle says, "I do not say that he shall pray for it." Liberty is not given us to pray concerning a sin having this character. We could not expect God to hear us. How could He surrender His right to punish sin, to the dishonor of His authority? The reader must remember that we are not now speaking of the government of God in relation to the final and eternal issues. We are speaking of it in connection with its present exercise, here upon earth. There are present results flowing from God's government of His people. All unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17), but the government of God has penalties short of death in cases where it is not outraged in some extreme or shocking manner. As illustrating the matter before us we may refer to Acts 5:1-42. Ananias and Sapphira committed what may be called a very common sin, but they committed it under circumstances that greatly aggravated its character. It became a sin unto death, and in present penalty they were cut off from their place upon earth.

It is a great comfort to be assured that when we see a brother sinning, not unto death, we have liberty to pray for him. It is also comforting to know that God in such cases will deliver from the extreme penalty. All bodily affliction of course tends to death; but every bodily affliction does not indicate sinning unto death. To discern the case that is sinning unto death will require great nearness to God. In any other case we may without hesitation pray for the brother's life to be spared.

It is interesting and instructive to note that it is in this connection the apostle reiterates what he has taught before, that the practice of sin is not characteristic of the one who is born of God (1 John 5:18). He has just been speaking of a brother falling into sin, and also under specially aggravating circumstances, but this is not the brother's practice. There is a difference between falling into the mire and wallowing in it. It is true of a child of God, notwithstanding his falls, that he does not practise sin — sinning is not his uniform practice. He is in the hands of the Father and of the Son (John 10:28-29). Satan may trip him up, but cannot seize him out of their hands. The whole world lies in the grasp and power of the wicked one, but the one who has been born of God has been delivered from his power. He is forever safe in the divine hands that have effected his deliverance. How good to know the limitations of Satan's power! He may annoy, deceive and cause us to stumble and fall, but he has no power to seize us out of the Hands that have plucked us as brands out of the eternal burning. We are of God — in kinship with Him. It is an abiding relationship (1 John 5:19). Is it presumption in the children of God of this Christian dispensation to claim such confidence towards Him as we have been speaking of? Is it arrogant assurance on our part to assert that we have access to God? that it is our privilege to intercede with Him? and that He hears us and grants our request? Do we exceed the bounds of proper humility when we say, "We do not practise sin?" Is it unwarranted boasting for us to declare the absolute impotency of the wicked one to seize us out of the hands of the Father and the Son? Do we go beyond the truth when we say, "We are of God," "we have fellowship with God?" Are we claiming too much when we declare that we are participating in the life eternal? In 1 John 5:20 the apostle explains how it is

we are able to affirm so great things — things that surely are incomprehensible to the mere human mind. He says, "We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true: and we are in Him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."

Notice, first, "We know the Son of God has come." The incarnation of the Son of God is a matter of common Christian knowledge. There is no child of God who knows not that. When the apostle says, "We know the Son of God has come," he appeals to what is apprehended and realized by every Christian. But he goes further than this. If we know that the Son of God has come, we know also that He "has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true." This is common Christian knowledge likewise. In the Old Testament ages God's children did not have this understanding. To them God was not fully revealed. He was not in the light to them. He was surrounded by clouds, dwelt unrevealed behind a veil. They knew and comprehended Him only so far as He had revealed Himself. But now, through the incarnate Son, God is revealed. He is in the light. We comprehend Him as the Old Testament saints could not. In the incarnate Son the invisible God has come into visibility, and by the visible revelations of Himself we comprehend the invisible One. He has thus given us an understanding, to know Him that is true. And if the incarnate Son has given "us" an understanding, it is not to a class among "us." It is the common heritage of the saints in this dispensation; it is the possession of the family — knowledge in which every member of the family shares. The very babes in Christ know Him that is true. But more. We also realize that we are in Him that is true. It is not that we measure the full blessedness of the position to which we belong, but we know we are in the position. The fact has been revealed. The position has been declared and we are told that we are in it. We are assured that we are partakers of the divine nature. It is on the ground of divine testimony to the fact, that we are able to say, "We are of God."

We know also how it is that we are "in Him that is true." The Son of God came into our position here, assumed our humanity without its sinfulness, died, and thus passed out of our position, and in resurrection took up a new position. In this new position He associates with Himself those to whom He is the source of life — those who live through Him. Such then have life in the risen, incarnate Son of God. As connected with Adam we have died; the death of Christ being judicially the end of that connection. But, living to Him who died and rose again, we are new creatures — new men (2 Corinthians 5:14-17). We are connected with the new Adam, the risen, incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ. Being connected with Him, having life in Him we are in Him that is true — the true God. He is Himself the true God and eternal life. What a position — the position of the risen, incarnate Son of God! He is still a man, and in Him we are new men — children of God. This is our place before God, our relation to Him.

Outside this position and relation, everything on which the heart may be set is an idol (1 John 5:21). Our apostle exhorts us to keep ourselves from idols — from everything outside of our position in God's Son. May we heed the exhortation. We cannot honor and exalt the Adam-man without dishonoring and degrading the incarnate Son. To worship Him — the Man Christ Jesus — to ascribe divine honor and glory to Him, is not idolatry. It is our joy and glory.

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