

Through the Bible - 1 John

by Zac Poonen

The main theme of 1 John is life and fellowship, emphasizing that these are the two eternal realities that are most important for Christians.

Duration: 55:56

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, 1 John 1:8-9, 1 John 2:6, 1 John 2:9, 1 John 2:12-14

Topics: "Through The Bible"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of testing the spirits and discerning whether a gift is from the Holy Spirit. The three main themes of the book of 1 John are obedience to God's commandments, love for one another, and confessing that Jesus came in the flesh. The speaker encourages believers to prioritize these three things in their church to build it according to God's will. He also highlights the tragedy of Christians missing the main thing and getting occupied with insignificant matters. The sermon concludes by emphasizing that having the life of God, characterized by purity, humility, love, and goodness, is essential, and that fellowship is more important than mere organization and activity.

Transcript

Let's turn today to the first letter of John, 1 John chapter 1. There are two things that he says here about God. One he says in chapter 1 and verse 5, God is light, and chapter 4 verse 8, God is love. Basically that's the theme of the letter, light and love.

In practical terms for us, that means life and fellowship. Because in him, in Jesus was life, and that life was the light of men. It is through our life, through the life of Jesus that the light was seen.

And it's through our life that the light will be seen, not through our teaching. God is love, and John reminds us of the one commandment that Jesus gave. It's very interesting, you know, that in none of the first three Gospels do we read Jesus' words saying, A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another.

By this will all men know you are my disciples, that you love one another. John was the one who emphasized that. He was the one who heard it clearly.

And that's what he emphasizes in this letter, that if you love one another, you'll have fellowship. The proof of it is fellowship. So life and fellowship, that is what is also the theme of this letter.

And when you read the first four verses, which is an introduction, he speaks about that which was from the beginning. You read that in John's Gospel too. In the beginning was the word, John's letter also.

Now we must remember that the Apostle John wrote all his letters just a few years before he died. Probably when he was around 90 years old, or 95, I don't know, at least 90. He had been baptized in the Holy Spirit in the day of Pentecost 60 years earlier.

For 60 years he had walked with God. He had established churches, no doubt done many miracles, spoken in tongues, prophesied, seen the ministry of other Apostles, and all the other 11 Apostles had died. He was the only one living.

He had seen the mighty movement with which churches were established, and he had seen the decline of those churches towards the end of the first century. He had seen various false prophets, various doctrines, he had seen various good believers emphasizing various things in their zeal. And now, with the maturity of a 90 year old man, who has walked with God for 60 years, and who knows God so intimately, the man who was, I'm sure, walking closer to God than any man on earth at that time, the man who could look back over 60 years of the growth of the church and could see what was important and what was not important, where people went astray, over-emphasizing something, where they went astray, under-emphasizing something, he writes with maturity.

If you think this is the writing of a young 30 year old, we don't have to take it with so much seriousness, but it's the writing of a mature 90 year old. All his letters were written at that age, Revelation was written at that age, John's Gospel was written at that age. He waited till he was 90 years old before he wrote anything.

And what do we see him emphasizing? It's very, very important for us to study 1 John, to see what he's emphasizing. There are some people who feel, we can't say for sure, that 1 John was probably the last book written. It was written after John's Gospel, after Revelation, after 2 John, after 3 John, and this is probably the last book of Holy Scripture written.

Possible. After he had seen on the Lord on the Isle of Patmos. And the thing that we need to study in this book is not only what he says, but also what he does not say.

Because what he does not say teaches us what he realized are not the things to be emphasized. If I'm writing a four page letter, there are a lot of things I don't want to emphasize. I mean, they are okay, they are there, but they are not the main things.

Take time to think of that. I could mention a few things. He does not speak anything about church government, the pattern of church government.

Should you have elders, should you have pastors, should you have bishops? Okay, there is a pattern in 1 Corinthians and other passages of Scripture, Timothy and Titus, but that's not what John's emphasizing because that's not the main thing. He's not emphasizing speaking in tongues, he's not emphasizing healing, he's not emphasizing prosperity. There are many things written in other passages of the New Testament he doesn't emphasize.

He doesn't emphasize the pattern of the Sunday meeting. You know, the reason why I say this is because for many Christians, these are the main things which I just mentioned. Those are the things they talk about.

Whereas John doesn't. He talks about what was in the beginning when there was no church, no church government, no Sunday meeting, no believers, no human beings, no angels, no heaven, no earth. Way back in the beginning when only God existed.

He's going back to then. And he says, what was there in the beginning when only God existed, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? What did they have? Did they have tongues? Did they have healing? Did they have church pattern? Did they have church government? What did they have way back then? They had life. Life.

Eternal life. A certain quality of life. That's what he calls light.

And what else did they have? Fellowship. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Perfect fellowship without any disturbance.

And so what he's saying is, brothers and sisters, these are the two eternal realities. Everything else is for a period. You get taken up with these temporary things and fight and quarrel and argue about these things.

And miss the two eternal realities, you have missed everything. You get taken up with theological information. And you miss these two eternal realities in your life.

You have missed the main thing. It's like if you take a car and you break it all down and you're finally left with one or two nuts and bolts. All these other things are like just one or two nuts and bolts.

The main thing is the car. That's gone. And you're left with one or two nuts and bolts and you're occupied with that.

That's how many Christians are. Occupied with one small little thing and they miss the main thing. And John, from the perspective of 60 years of observing Christendom and the development and the decline of Christendom in that first century, teaches us what we need to learn today.

If you don't have the life of God in you, that life of purity, that life of humility, that life of love and goodness, brother, sister, whatever else you may have, it's a waste of time. Compared to the life of God, all the rest is rubbish. And if, when you come together with other people, you don't have fellowship, but you have organization and service and activity and preaching and everything else, you're wasting your time.

Even evangelism. Waste of time. There was no evangelism way back in the beginning.

There was only life and fellowship. There was no Bible teaching way back in the beginning. Life and fellowship.

Please remember this. Keep this in the back of your mind always in everything. Take a Christian home.

What's the most important thing in the home? That everything must be neat and tidy in its proper place. That the walls must be always freshly painted. Curtains must be nice.

Rubbish. What's the most important thing in a Christian home? Life. The life of God in the husband and the wife and the children.

And, what's the other one? Fellowship. How can we have life and fellowship? Through humility, humility, humility. That's the ground on which all these things grow.

Our calling as human beings is to humble ourselves. Then we provide the ground on which God can make all these things grow. And so in verses 1 to 3 he says, from the beginning, what was from the beginning, we have heard it, we have seen it with our eyes.

He says that life was manifested in Jesus. We saw it, we heard it, we touched it. That life was manifested and it needs to be manifested in this year 2000 and in the next year and the years to come till Jesus comes again.

And we have seen and bear witness, not to a doctrine. Look at the number of Christians today arguing over doctrine. Over silly things like, what is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Should we take medicines when we are sick or not? Are these the things that are going to matter in eternity? Life.

We proclaim to you that eternal life. That life which never had a beginning. That pure holy life.

And wherever you go, till the end of your life, proclaim eternal life. That's what I want to do more and more till the end of my life. In my younger days I emphasized many things.

I have also been foolish. The same apostle John in his younger days, he was more interested in calling down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans. We read in Luke chapter 9. We have also been like that with foolish zeal but now we have come to wisdom.

And you young people can receive some of the wisdom that we older people have learned through our own foolishness. You don't have to do those foolish things that we did when we were young. If you will humble yourself and take a little advice.

Emphasize life and fellowship. Not fellowship without that life. That also we find in Christendom today.

National councils of all denominations irrespective of whether they are born again or not. Ecumenical movements which just bring everybody together and finally brings everybody from every religion as well. That is fellowship without life.

That type of fellowship people can have in hell also. That's not the fellowship I am talking about. I am talking about the fellowship which was way back in the beginning before even hell existed.

A fellowship based on life. I don't want a fellowship which is not based on life. Friendship yes.

I am willing to be friendly with other people but fellowship is a deeper thing. Life and fellowship. They go together.

We have seen that eternal life which was with the father manifested to us. We have seen and we heard and we proclaim it to you and the purpose of proclaiming this life is that you may have fellowship. What are the two words? Life and fellowship.

God is light and God is love. And our fellowship is with the father. Fellowship we read in verse 3 is in two directions like the cross.

The cross is the means by which we come to fellowship with God and with one another. Between God and me there is a cross on which my savior died. Because of that I have fellowship.

I can never have fellowship with God apart from that cross because I am never going to be good enough. Between you and me there must also be a cross on which I die if I want to have fellowship with you on which you must die if you want to have fellowship with me. There is no fellowship without the cross in the vertical direction or in the horizontal direction.

Please remember that the cross is the secret of life and fellowship. There is no life without the cross. When was the cross in God's mind? Was it after he created the heaven and earth? No.

It was in his mind way back from the beginning. It says in Revelation 13 the lamb was slain from the foundations of the earth. Way back in God's mind he knew that the second person of the Trinity would have to come to earth as a man and be crucified.

That was not something he discovered later on. And today for us the way to the tree of life is through the sword falling upon us. And the only people who can fellowship around the tree of life are those on whom the sword has fallen on the life of Adam.

What is it that causes problems between believers? The life of Adam. And you try to come to the church and bring the life of Adam there, there is always going to be conflict. You come to the church and bring the intelligence and reasoning and cleverness of Adam, there will be conflict.

Put it under the sword, the intelligence of Adam, the cleverness of Adam, the life of Adam. Put it all under the sword. Don't only kill the bad sheep of Adam, kill the good sheep of Adam.

You remember how Saul lost the kingdom? He killed the bad sheep and he didn't kill the good sheep. That's how he lost the kingdom. And you can kill the bad sheep and not kill the good sheep.

What are the bad sheep? Jealousy, bitterness, sexual sin, love of money. These are the bad sheep. What are the good sheep? Our intelligence, our cleverness, our talents, our abilities.

Put them also to death. Come to Jesus empty handed. Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

And then God will sanctify you, give you life. And from that life, he will use the faculties he gave you, whether it's your talent or intelligence or anything. But first of all, you got to lay it on the altar.

You say, but God gave it to me. Do you know that even what God gave, you have to put on the altar and kill, like Isaac? Who gave Isaac to Abraham? God. Who gave you your intelligence, your musical abilities, your talents? Put it on the altar, kill it, and let God raise it up from the dead and then use it for his glory.

That's the only way we can serve God. I've done that. God's given me intelligence, I think as much as most of you anyway.

But what did I do with it? I laid it on the altar like Isaac. I said, Lord, this is yours, but I'm not going to use it. I'm going to put it down to death.

And in resurrection, I got it back to use for his glory. In everything, it's like that. And then it becomes sanctified.

It's not worldly. You can come to the scriptures with worldly wisdom. And why does he say all this? So that our joy may be made complete.

That's the purpose. Do you know that joy is a very essential part of the Christian life? Because joy is the atmosphere of heaven. There is no gloom in heaven.

You don't see any angels sitting like this in heaven, depressed. No, they're always full of life and joy. We say, heaven came down and glory filled my soul.

That's the purpose. The Holy Spirit comes to bring the atmosphere of heaven into our hearts. Joy, fellowship, life brings joy, fullness of joy.

The whole purpose with which scripture is written is that our joy may be full. The devil says that if you give your life completely to God, you'll be miserable, long faced person. There'll be no joy in your life.

And I'm sorry to say some Christians give that impression. Their face is so long. They look so depressed.

And then they try to witness for Christ. I heard of one of these long faced people witnessing about Christ to somebody. And that chap said, do you want to accept Jesus? That chap said, no, thank you.

I've got enough problems already. If you give your witness like that, if our life is not radiating joy, if our home is not radiating joy, something is wrong. Something is wrong.

That is not God's will. We have missed the will of God somewhere. We have missed life.

We missed fellowship. The first thing he says is, OK, you want this life, you want this fellowship, you want this joy? Listen to number one point. God is light.

There is no darkness in him. Please remember that. No lying, zero lying, zero impurity, zero hatred, zero pride, no darkness at all.

That's the number one message. Do you still want it? Do you want this life where you never tell a lie, where you never hate anybody, where you never are jealous of anyone, where you're never proud? If you choose it, you'll never be gloomy. You'll never be depressed.

You'll rejoice always. Is it possible to live such a life on earth? Is Philippians 4.4, Rejoice in the Lord, always written for people who go to heaven? After going to heaven, or is it here on earth? It's here on earth. He says, your joy can be full here on earth.

Whether you're on Patmos, persecuted, or whether you're sitting comfortably in an easy chair, your joy can be full because it's not dependent on your circumstances. If you choose this way of light, but if we say we have fellowship with him and we walk in darkness, then we are not practicing the truth. There are lots of Christians like this.

They say they have fellowship with God, they walk in darkness, and you can see it in their face. The joy of the Lord is not there. There's no spring in their step.

There's no song in their lips. There's no twinkle in their eyes. Something is missing.

Even young people and the older we become, the more joy we should have if we are walking with God. If we walk in the light, this beautiful verse, misquoted by many Christians. Have you heard a verse which says the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin? Have you heard that verse? You know it's not in the Bible.

The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin is not in the Bible. What the Bible says is, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. And there's a lot of difference between that and just saying the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin because the wrong person can take a hold of that verse.

1 John 1.7 does not say the blood of Jesus cleanses anybody and everybody from all sin. It cleanses only those who walk in the light as God himself is in the light. That means only a person who has a burning desire to live in the light of God with nothing hidden in his life.

This is not talking about perfection. Coming into the light means I hide nothing. I come into the light of God's purity and I say, Lord, you can see me as I am.

I don't want to hide anything in my life. This is not for hypocrites. This is not for those who want to hide something.

Then the blood of Jesus will cleanse us, not just cover us like the Old Testament blood of bulls and goats, but cleanse it, remove it, wipe it out. So there's no record of it anymore justified by his blood cleansed from all sin. But if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.

Who is this man saying, writing this verse? A man who's 90 years old, who's walked with God for 60 years, he still says we. We, verse 8. So did John have sin in his life at the age of 90? Yes or no? Yes. He says we.

He doesn't say you. He says we. Here is this godly man, the holiest man walking on earth.

At that time he acknowledges, there are still areas in my life where I have not yet become like Jesus Christ. I'm pressing on. So there'll never be a time in our life when we can say we are free from sin.

John was climbing a mountain. He was born again one day. He was the foot of the mountain.

Becoming like Christ is the top of the mountain. He was climbing and he had probably reached a long way up, maybe 75% of the way up. But he still hadn't reached the top.

He says still there's sin in me. What type of sin? Not anger and bitterness and lust and adultery and all that. No.

He had finished with that when he was about 100 feet. Now he's about 20,000 feet. He's dealing with other sins, which we probably don't even think about as sins.

You know, the Christian life is a struggle at every stage. Have you seen the second standard students struggling with his arithmetic? Yeah, he struggles with his arithmetic. Multiplication and all is difficult for him.

Have you seen the PhD students struggling with his arithmetic? Mathematics? Both are struggling, but at two different levels. He's struggling with multiplication and he's struggling with some complicated

mathematical problem. So Christian life is like that.

At every point it's a struggle. It's a struggle at five feet. It's a struggle at 20,000 feet.

Because there's sin. There's a depth and saturation of sin in this body. And as we get light on it, we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness and the fear of God.

But till the end of our life on earth, we will have to admit there's still sin in us. We're still not like Christ, but we are pressing on. It's becoming better every year.

It's better than it was last year. Verse nine. If we confess our sins, he's faithful and righteous to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

One little point here. To whom should we confess our sin? Very important, because there's a lot of false teaching on this, particularly in cultist groups that try to control you by saying, confess your sins in public. I've heard of groups, Christian groups of born-again people, where people are told to confess all their sins in public, which they committed way back from their earliest memory.

This is of the devil. It's not of God. Sin must be confessed in the circle in which it was committed.

For example, if I have a dirty thought, who is in that circle? Only God. You don't know about it. So I confess only to God.

If I slap you, there are two people in that circle, God and you. I confess to you, and I confess to God. If I've hurt somebody, if I've hurt five people, then there are six people in that circle, God plus those five people.

I confess to God, I confess to those five people. I don't go and confess to other people. Never.

Sin which is committed only against God, you confess only to God. Sin which is committed against God plus X number of people, we confess to God and those X number of people. That's all.

Please remember this. It will save you from a lot of stupidity. It's going on in Christendom today, where leaders and pastors try to control people by making you confess your sin, so they know about your past life, and then you can never leave their group because they can blackmail you.

They say, we know all about your past life. You better be careful. Stay here for the rest of your life.

There are so many wicked men in Christendom today. Don't listen to their foolish teachings. They'll quote some verse like it says in James 5, confess your sins to one another.

They never show you the context of it, that that's talking about healing. That if you are not healed because of some sin in your life, confess that sin in the presence of only the elders and be healed. It's not talking about public confession of sin.

Don't be fooled by people who take one verse out of context. Okay, he's faithful. He'll forgive us, cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar. These are two different things. Verse eight is having sin, which is unconscious inside us.

Verse 10 is have not sinned, which is committing sin. If anybody says I've never seen in my life, he's a liar. I don't think any of us have that problem.

Chapter two, verse one. Now, my little children, I'm writing to you. What is the what is his word to us? These things I'm writing to you that you should not sin.

That's the first word. But we may sin. This is the balance of Scripture.

What is the balance of Scripture? You should not sin, but we may sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. Why is he called Jesus Christ, the righteous? Because a lot of advocates are liars.

But Jesus Christ is not. Jesus Christ doesn't want to lie. He will help you if you speak the truth.

He's a righteous advocate. He's on your side. But if you want him to help you, please speak the truth.

Don't tell a lie. Don't pretend that you have not sinned. Don't pretend that you're holy when you're not.

Acknowledge your sin and he will forgive you. He will support you. He will defend you.

He's an advocate on your side, but the righteous advocate. Now, can you tell me what is the difference? Supposing John had written like this, the last part of that sentence. No, the last.

There are two sentences in verse one. Supposing he had put the second sentence first and the first sentence second. Would it have made a difference? What do you think? Supposing it had read like this? Verse one.

My little children, if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. But I'm writing to you that you may not sin. Do you think that would have made a difference? It's the same truths.

It would have made a difference because then the emphasis is being given on the fact, first of all, that, of course, you will sin. And the other thing comes secondary. Of course, we should try to not sin, but that's not how it's put.

The emphasis is put, first of all, on don't sin. That's the emphasis. And then, if you fall, this is what you must do.

In other words, John is saying, you don't have to fall. We don't straight away tell a person, you're going to fall. Think of a man who's climbing a mountain.

You tell him, well, of course, you know you're going to fall and you're going to break your bones. Is that the first thing you tell a man who's going to climb a mountain? No. You tell him, you can climb.

You can go up to the top, brother. You need not fall. But if you fall, here's an ambulance ready to pick you up.

There's a lot of difference between putting one thing first and the other thing second. And many times, people preach putting the second thing first. Of course, you people will sin.

Why do we tell them that first? Why not tell them what it says first here? You should not sin. And then tell them, if you do, this is what you can do. That's the right way.

Supposing you tell your child who's going for an examination. He's all nervous. And he says, you tell your child, you know, you may fail in this examination.

What encouragement to that poor child. Of course, you may fail. Then, of course, you can always do it next year, you know, don't worry.

Is that how you tell a child going to an examination? He said, no, you're going to do well. And if you do badly, don't worry. Don't get discouraged.

Don't go and commit suicide. Come home. That's the way we do it for children.

Why can't we do it like that in the Christian life? You will not sin. You're going to overcome. But if you fail, don't commit suicide.

Just come home. God will help you. That's the right way.

Okay, because he's the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. How do we know that we have come to know Jesus? Verse 3. Because we keep his commandments. And if you say that you know him, verse 4, and you don't keep his commandments, you're a liar.

Keeping the commandments is one of the great themes of 1 John. Obeying God, keeping his commandments. Obeying God, keeping his commandments.

It's one of the great themes of 1 John. The other theme is, of course, loving one another. But let me proceed here.

Verse 6. The one who says he abides in Christ must walk as he walked, not as other men walk. Don't say we are human. 1 John 2.6. If you say that you are abiding in Christ, every Christian says that, what is your responsibility? To walk as Jesus walked.

That's your responsibility. And that we must take as a challenge. We cannot become like Christ.

That comes in chapter 3, verse 2, only when he comes. Walking as he walked is here on earth. You see, walking is a conscious act.

We don't walk in our sleep. We walk when we are awake. It's a conscious act.

I walk consciously. But there's a lot of me which is unconscious. I don't know so many things in my life.

In those areas, I'll become like Christ when he comes. He says, I'm not writing a new commandment to you, but an old one which you've heard from the beginning. And that is about love.

If you hate your brother, you're still in darkness. Verse 9. But the one who loves his brother abides in the light. These are two of the main themes of the letter.

Obedience to God's commandments and loving one another. Obedience to God's commandments and loving one another. Then he writes in verse 12 to 14 to three groups of Christians.

The babies, spiritual babies, spiritually little like young people, and spiritually mature fathers. Babies, young men, fathers. What did he tell the babies? Your sins are forgiven.

Babies must know your sins are forgiven. What's the second thing he tells babies? That's in the last part of verse 13. Little children, you know the father.

There are two things all Christian babies must know. One, all your sins are forgiven and that God is your loving father. That's the point you start at.

If you don't start there, you can't even grow. Secondly, we go to the next level. What is the young men, those who are little more mature in the Christian life? What should they know? First of all, to overcome Satan.

Middle of verse 13. I've written unto you young men, because you overcome the evil one. And the latter part of verse 14.

Because you're strong, the word of God abides in you, and that's how you overcome the evil one. In other words, you overcome Satan by the word of God. By abiding in you.

Then what about fathers? What do the fathers need to know? They need to know God. Him who was from the beginning. From the beginning there was life and fellowship.

When you come to maturity, you come to know God. And again, he says in verse 14, the same thing. There's only one thing I have to write to you fathers.

You've got to know God. There's nothing greater than that. To know God personally, to know the values he has, to know the things that existed from all eternity.

And that's how you can distinguish today. Those who are always talking about forgiveness and God is a loving father. He takes care of all my needs.

He heals me. He provides for me. That's good.

Don't despise them. It's like babies who say mama, dada and things like that. Don't despise them.

That's good. But don't spend all your life saying mama, dada. You've got to grow up from that.

You've got to grow up to go to school. You've got to grow up to be strong. You've got to grow up to learn how to ride a cycle.

Things like that. You've got to grow up to overcome Satan. And then you've got to go beyond that.

See, some people get stuck there. They're always resisting Satan, rebuking Satan all the time, all over the place. Now, Jesus didn't spend his time rebuking Satan all around.

No. Don't think such people are spiritual. They are in a stage.

And if they get stuck there, there's a problem. They must go on to the place where they know God. That's the greatest thing of all.

Okay. And then to all these three groups, he has got an exhortation. Don't love the world.

Verse 15. Can fathers also be in danger of loving the world? Sure. The most mature person in the world, Christian, is also in danger of loving the world and needs an exhortation.

Don't love the world. If you love the world, you cannot love the father. Everything that is in the world.

And there are three things mentioned there. The lust of the flesh, which is the passions in our body, sexual passions, passion to eat too much, sleep too much, all types of lusts, of anger, various things. The lust of the eyes, that is the desire to buy everything I see, whatever I see, and related to the love of money, that is.

And the pride of life. These are the three things which characterize the world system. And that's not from the father.

And anyone who loves these things cannot love the father. The world is passing away and all these lusts will pass away. The one who does the will of God will remain forever.

The only one who is going to remain forever is the one who spends his life doing God's will. And then he says about Antichrist. You know that there are Antichrist is going to come in the last days, but there are already Antichrist in the church.

People who got the spirit of the Antichrist, who want to exalt themselves. You know the Antichrist, it says in 2 Thessalonians 2, sits in the temple as God. He says there are already people sitting in the church pretending that they are God.

What are the marks of them? They want to rule over other people. They don't want to serve other people. They are the Antichrist.

The people who never ask forgiveness from anyone, because God doesn't ever ask forgiveness from anyone because he never makes a mistake. There are some people who act like God as if they have never made a mistake in their life. A lot of people like that.

A lot of Christian leaders who act as though, I never make any mistakes. I say till the end of my life, I will be asking forgiveness from people because I make mistakes. I'm not God.

Don't ever think that a time will come in your life where you'll never make a mistake. You will. I will.

We got to humble ourselves and say we're not God. We may slip up. And when we do, we must be ready to ask forgiveness from the lowest and the least person on earth.

So the Antichrist is already there, but John was so powerful in the church that these Antichrist had to go away when John was there. And our church, the preaching in the church must be so powerful that people sitting with the spirit of the Antichrist must get offended and leave and go somewhere else where all the other Antichrist congregate in some other group. Let them go there.

But they can't be here. We need people like John to drive these Antichrist out of the church. They went out from us, verse 19, because they didn't belong.

Their spirit didn't belong to our spirit. So they couldn't stay here. They can go and join the other people in some other group where their spirit is the same.

And he says you also need to discern that. You got an anointing and you can discern because that anointing, verse 27, will teach you all things. You don't need John.

You don't need John or any apostle to come and teach you. You got the Holy Spirit to show you what spirit that fellow has. So little children abide in him.

Chapter 3. See what a great love the Father has bestowed upon us that we are called the children of God. We still don't know what we're going to become because we don't see clearly, verse 2, we don't see clearly how that future life is all going to be like. People ask me so many things about the future life and I say, listen, I don't know all those things.

It has not yet become clear what we shall be. Why do you try to speculate what all you're going to do in eternity? Because I don't know. John admits at the age of 90, he says, it has not appeared what we shall be.

I don't know many things about the future, but I know how to live on this earth. And I know this much about the future and that's all I want to say, that when he appears, verse 2, we shall be like him. That I know.

And therefore, everyone, if you have this hope, you will purify yourself as he is pure. How do you know that you got the hope of the second coming of Christ and that you'll be like him when he comes? You will spend your life purifying yourself. How much will you purify yourself? Until you reach his standard of purity.

Until you become like Jesus, it says, you purify yourself. I told you, Jesus cleanses us. 1 John 1 7, his blood cleanses us.

This is we purifying ourselves. This is the balance of scripture. And then he talks about sin.

Sin is lawlessness and Jesus appeared to take away sin. Now there are two things mentioned here. Jesus appeared for two reasons.

Verse 5, to take away our sin. Verse 8, to destroy the works of the devil. He came to take away sin and he came to untie the works of the devil.

You know, the picture here is we were all born on earth with a beautiful bundle of thread, round big ball of thread, beautifully tied up. And we started untying it from the day we were born and tied it up into knots. That is our sins.

And today after we have lived 15-20 years, oh, this beautiful roll of thread is full of thousands, ten thousands of knots and we are discouraged. Jesus has come to untie the works of the devil and give us back a clean ball of thread again. Isn't that wonderful? I praise God for that message, that he can undo all the wretched mistakes I made in my life and give me a hope for the future that I can still make something good out of my life.

You know, the people who came to work at the 11th hour, they got a reward. Even if you are wasted 90% of your life, 11 hours out of 12 you are wasted, you can still come to the Lord and make something good out of the rest of your life. There is hope even for older people who have lived most of their life in sin.

That is a tremendous encouragement. Then it says here, verse 9, no one who is born of God practices sin. That means keeps on committing sin.

That is the meaning of that verse. If you keep on committing sin consciously, it is doubtful whether you are born again. A person who is born again may slip up, but he won't choose to keep on committing.

He may slip up. We saw that in chapter 2, verse 1. And this is how we distinguish the children of God and the children of the devil. Only two categories of people in the world, children of God and children of the devil.

Then he speaks about love. He says, don't be like Cain, verse 12, who hated his brother. Now this verse tells us why he killed his brother.

His deeds were evil and his brothers were righteous. Cain was an evil man. That's why his offering was not accepted.

Abel was a righteous man. That's why his offering was accepted. The Lord had regard to Abel and then to his offering.

The Lord did not have regard to Cain and then to his offering. So however good your offering may be, if you are not a good person, God will not accept your offering. That's the meaning of that verse.

Don't be surprised if the world hates you. The world will naturally hate those who don't belong to it because we have come out of this world. Here is the proof of love.

We know love, verse 16. Many people know John 3.16. They don't know 1 John 3.16. All those who know John 3.16 must also know 1 John 3.16. John 3.16 says about Jesus laying down his life for us. 1 John 3.16 says we must lay down our life for others.

This is the balance of scripture. John 3.16 plus 1 John 3.16 together give us the balance of scripture. He laid down his life for us.

We must lay down our life for others. And the proof of that love is that we help them when they are in need. One proof anyway.

That's not love just in word and tongue. Then he speaks about our heart condemning us. Verse 20.

What is the meaning of this verse? In whatever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things. That means if your conscience itself is telling you about sin, can you imagine how much more sin there is in your life which God knows? You are seeing only 10 percent. God sees 100 percent.

And if your heart is condemning you, God's condemnation is more. But we don't have to worry about that other area because God does not hold us responsible for what we do not see. It is enough if you keep free from what your conscience tells you is wrong.

You know all of us, this 10 percent that we see, just keep that part clear. The rest God will take care of. If our heart does not condemn us, we can have confidence before God.

And when we have confidence before God, because we've got a clear conscience, whatever we ask, we can receive. This teaches us that one of the most important requirements for answered prayer is a clear conscience. Whatever we ask, we can receive because, to the best of our knowledge, we are doing, keeping His commandments and doing the things that are pleasing to Him.

Chapter 4. Don't believe every spirit. That means if somebody gets up and says, thus said the Lord, just hang on, don't believe that. Test it.

You know, I've heard people, when I say, that person who's conducting the healing campaign, I don't know anything about his life, so I will not speak evil of the man. The Bible says speak evil of no man. But his method, I can definitely point out, is not scriptural.

Look at the way he's doing it. That's not the way Jesus did it. Jesus didn't collect money before conducting a healing meeting.

And Jesus did not bring people up to give a testimony, say, see what a great healer I am. Listen to this fellow's testimony. And what are these testimonies? I had a little pain in the back and now I'm okay and I could hear 80%.

Now I can hear 90%. Is this the type of healings Jesus did? Jesus picked up a man who was born blind and opened his eyes. A man who was born lame and made him walk.

These are the type of testimonies that are recorded in the scriptures, not these type of things we hear today. And people say, oh brother, don't speak against the Holy Spirit. Don't test, don't say that's the Holy Spirit.

I said, no, the Bible says test every spirit. I'm doing what 1 John 4 says. Don't believe every spirit.

That's exactly what I'm doing. Somebody makes some babbling noise and I'm supposed to believe it's tongues. Well, I have to see whether it's edifying, is it blessing the church? If it's not, I must test that spirit.

I've actually heard tongues from a person. When the tongues is cast out, when the demon is cast out, he stops speaking in tongues. So what does that teach? Even demons can speak in tongues.

I've also heard genuine tongues. There's a difference. Test the spirits.

If it is of God, it will edify you, it will lift you up, it will encourage you, it will bless you. If it's not of God, you'll find like a wet blanket. Have you ever had a wet blanket on you? It's not a very comfortable feeling.

That's how it is in some, when a gift is operated which is not of the Holy Spirit. Test the spirits. And this is the other great theme of John.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus has come in the flesh is from God. The three great themes of 1 John are 1. Obedience to God's commandments. 2. Love one another.

3. Confess that Jesus came in the flesh. Remember this, the man who has watched the development of the church for 60 years. He says if you want to emphasize something that will build the church the way God wants it to be built, emphasize obedience to God's commandments, emphasize love for one another, and emphasize the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Are these three things being emphasized in your church? If not, that's the reason you have so many problems. It's a very simple guideline God has given us in 1 John. You want to escape these problems, emphasize these three things.

Obedience to all of God's commandments, everything that Jesus commanded. Fervent love for one another, no excuse not for loving, forgiving one another, no jealousy, perfect love. Third, the humanity of Jesus Christ.

Confessing that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Demons don't like to confess that. Ok, you are from God little children.

Lovely verse 4.4. He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world. That's why we are not afraid of the devil or anyone in the world. And then he goes on emphasizing again verse 7. Let us love one another.

Love was manifest. Now I want to point out this verse to you now. Verse 12.

4.12. No one has seen God at any time. This expression, no one has seen God at any time, occurs twice in the Bible. Do you know that? Here in 4.12, it also occurs in John 1.18. Only two places in the Bible.

And it's very interesting when you put both of them together, you get a truth. What is that? John 1.18, no one has seen God at any time, but Jesus came and showed people what God is like. 1 John 4.12, now Jesus has gone to heaven.

Again, no one has seen God at any time, but if we love one another, we can love one another. We can show the world what God is like. They haven't seen God, but they can see God in the church.

That's the meaning. When Jesus was here, he was the body of Christ. And the God that people had not seen could be seen in Jesus.

Now we are the body of Christ and the God whom nobody has seen can be seen in you and me as we love one another, as we seek for life and fellowship, as we live acknowledging God is light and love. Beautiful truth. You go to a village, you go to a town, nobody has seen God at any time.

How are you going to show God to them? With a Bible? No. With a church where brothers and sisters love one another and manifest God. Then they can see God.

When Jesus was on earth, he said, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. Today the body of Christ must be able to say, if you have seen us, you have seen a little bit of what Jesus is like. You have seen a little bit of what heaven is like.

If you have come to my home and you have lived in my home, you have seen a little bit of what heaven is like. If you have come to fellowship with me and you have walked with me and you have spent some time with me, you would have tasted a little bit of what Jesus is like, a little bit of what heaven is like. That should be our testimony.

If that is not our testimony, we still have to say, they still haven't seen what God is like. I spent twenty years there preaching, but they still haven't seen what God is like. I established a church there, but they still haven't seen what God is like.

That's the tragedy today. Verse seventeen, this is the confidence we have that as Jesus is, the last part, so are we in this world. Beautiful verse.

I am to live in this world exactly like Jesus. I can have authority over Satan just like Jesus had authority over Satan. Because as Jesus is today, so am I in this world.

Do you believe that? I hope you do. That's the only way we can live with dignity and confidence and boldness as we face the future. As Jesus is, so are we in this world.

A verse that I would like to put in front of every servant of God. As Jesus is, so are you in this world. Live with that authority.

Don't live with fear. There is no fear when we recognize God's love like this. Fear is because you're afraid God's going to punish you.

There's no fear in love. We love him because he first loved us. Verse nineteen.

If a man says he loves God and he hates his brother, he's a liar. He's not a believer. He's a liar.

Call him by his proper name. Don't call him a believer. He's a liar.

If a man says he loves God and he can't love the believer whom he sees. It says the brother whom he can see. Verse twenty.

Let me ask you. Do you love the brothers and sisters in South America? Yes or no? Yes. Do you love the brothers and sisters in Mongolia? Oh, no problem.

What about that brother and sister who lives in the same room as you? The problem is there. The brother whom you can see, not the brother in Mongolia and South America whom you can't see. If you can't love the brother and sister whom you can see, don't say you love God.

Chapter five. We read. Whatever is born of God, verse four, overcomes the world.

This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. How do we overcome the world? We believe that God loves us, that what Jesus has revealed of God is true and therefore nothing in this world has any attraction for us. Further, verse thirteen.

I've written all these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And once again, he says in verse fourteen. This is the confidence we have.

If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. We live with this confidence in a God who answers prayer. And when we know that he hears us, we will get what we ask for.

A promise, verse sixteen. If you see a brother committing a sin which is not so serious like Ananias and Sapphira's that he has to be killed for it, pray for him. Pray for him and God will forgive him.

I've used that promise many times. I see somebody committing a sin which I don't believe is as serious as Ananias and Sapphira's to be killed. I pray for him and I've seen God giving him life.

Why don't you follow this method of helping people? Last verse. Little children, guard yourselves from idols. And if 1 John is the last book written of scripture after Revelation, then this is the last word of inspired scripture ever written.

Keep yourself from idols. Keep yourself from anything that takes the place of God in your life. Church, government, church, pattern, speaking in tongues, healing, anything.

Good things, good sheep, bad sheep. Keep yourself from anything that takes the place of God in your life. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. Help us to appreciate and value the things that are of eternity.
We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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