

First John Study

by Sandy Simpson

Light or Darkness?

(1) 1 John 1:1-10

Some Bible commentators I looked at, in preparing this study series on First John, stated that this letter jumps around to many different theological points and there is no consistent theme. One example:

First John is, in many ways, a smorgasbord of theological concepts. It is virtually impossible to construct a convincing and decisive outline, and its themes/purposes are everywhere mentioned (cf., e.g., 1.3, 4; 2.1, 12, 13, 14, 21, 26; 5.13), yet no unifying theme or purpose can be easily construed from them ("1 John: Introduction, Argument, and Outline", Daniel B. Wallace, Thess.M., Ph.D.).

But I believe there is a very definite theme to First John. God is not an existentialist or postmodernist who views things as subjective or relative. In other words, with God everything is truth or lie, light or darkness, love or hate. If we say that He is our Lord and we follow Him, we must understand the truth of God. We must bring our ideas and motives in line with the Truth that is God by His Word. John understood this concept probably better than any other Apostle because, in all his letters, there is a recurring theme of opposites. This is why I have titled these lessons in First John by asking the same questions John asks. Are you walking in light or darkness? Are you obedient or disobedient? Truthful or a liar? Abiding or shrinking away? Do you have new life, or are you living in sin? Do you love or hate? Do you believe in Christ or antichrist? Do you love or fear? Do you believe or are you on your way to death? Are you in Christ or in the power of the evil one? These are the questions that John asks which are a test both for believers and unbelievers.

Background Information

John is the author of the Gospel of John as well as 1, Second and Third John. Which came first, the Gospel or the epistle? It is the majority view of scholars that the Gospel of John was written in A.D. 65, then the epistle was written in the late 60s (c. 66-69). 1 John was written to a group of people, possibly in more than one Asiatic community, with whom the author was personally acquainted and who were threatened with the same types of false teachings. False teachers had left the church (2:19), but were harassing the church and enticing it from a position outside. John's audience needed reassur-

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ance that what they had embraced—viz., that Christ had come in the flesh—was true. John assures his audience of this truth—as well as the truth of the Gospel in general—on two grounds: (1) He was an eyewitness to Christ (1.1-3), and (2) the Spirit bore witness to their spirit that these things were true (2.20, 27). First John lays the basis by describing the Person in whom we as believers have life, and the proof that He is who He said He was.

1 John 1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—

2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—

3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

Jesus Christ testified about Himself that He was from the beginning. In fact, He stated that He was God and always had been God.

John 8:58 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "**before Abraham was born, I am!**"

John heard this and wrote it down in the Gospel of John. John states that the disciples **heard, saw, looked at, and touched Jesus** and, therefore, they could testify and proclaim what He was to the world. They had heard Jesus confirm that He was the Son of God.

Luke 22:70 They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "**You are right in saying I am.**"

John 5:25 I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.**

They saw Jesus Christ with their own eyes. They followed Him, saw His miracles, listened to His teachings, and believed on Him as Messiah.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. **We have seen his glory**, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Acts 10:39-40 "**We are witnesses** of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised

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him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.”

The disciples also looked at and touched Jesus. This is especially referring to the fact that they saw Jesus in the flesh after His resurrection. First of all, they saw the empty tomb.

*John 20:1-8 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and **saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.** So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.** Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. **He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head.** The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. **He saw and believed.***

There were, then, many appearances of Jesus Christ to more than 500 witnesses after His resurrection, but particularly to the 12 disciples. Remember the story of Thomas?

*John 20:24-29 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, **"We have seen the Lord!"** But he said to them, **"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."** A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."** Thomas said to him, **"My Lord and my God!"** Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

Those who had not seen are those other than the 500 witnesses. That would be all of us today. So there had to be a record of those who were firsthand eyewitnesses, and that is what we have in the books of the New Testament. To establish a fact in any court, it has always been true that you have to have the word of at least two firsthand eyewitnesses. We have more than 500 who testified to Jesus' resurrection in the Bible!

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The Word of Life was manifested to us so that we might have eternal life. If we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we then have fellowship with other believers and with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our joy is then made complete because we have become one with Christ as His bridegroom.

Mark 10:9 “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

We are to keep the bond of unity we have in Christ by being children of the Light and living in that Light.

Eph. 4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Eph. 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light...

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

God is Light. There is not one tiny bit of darkness in God. Someday darkness, death, and sin will be thrown into the fire and will never be in the universe again. If we say we are children of the Light, yet walk in the darkness of our old sin nature, we are liars. There are no shades of gray with God. It is either Light or darkness. If we say we are His children, then we also need to demonstrate that there are no shades of gray in our belief system, and live that out. There is either God's light and truth, or there is no light or truth at all. This is hard for us to comprehend sometimes. We cannot have fellowship with God if we are still living in darkness because He IS Light. If you are living in darkness, you have no part in the Light. In pure light there is no darkness. If darkness is introduced, it is because of our sin, not any defect in God. God has given us forgiveness of sins in His Son and His indwelling Holy Spirit. We are, then, expected to live in His Light, not go back to darkness, or live in shades of gray.

There is a distinction that John consistently makes between those who are unsaved and saved. Those who are unsaved cannot help but practice sin. Those who are saved have the power to overcome sin, repent of sin, and turn from sin. But, if they practice sin, they show they are not really chil-

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dren of the Light. To practice something means to continually go over and over something until it becomes second nature. The word “practice” is used eight times in First John. This is significant. This is a key word to help us understand what John is addressing. The word “practice” in Greek is “poieo” (*poi-eh'-o*) meaning: *Do, make, bring forth, commit, cause, work, show, bear, keep, fulfill, deal, perform, and practice*. If we say that we are in Christ and yet walk in darkness, we are lying because we show we are not committed to the Truth. We said we were committed when we first believed, but then in actual practice, we may end up demonstrating the truth or lie of what we have said. Unbelievers do not and cannot practice truth. They have no desire to do so on a consistent basis. This is because their consciences have not been renewed by the Holy Spirit through being born again. Believers are given the Holy Spirit as Helper and have the power to live in the Truth. If true believers lie, they confess that sin, ask God to forgive them, and commit themselves to telling the truth as a life practice. People who say they are Christians, but continually practice lying, demonstrate that they are not in the Light, but still in the darkness. If we confess our sins, we have the blood of Jesus Christ to wash away those sins. If we say we are children of Light yet continue to practice sin, there is no difference between unbelievers and us. We don't just have an automatic covering for continual sin. The covering of the blood of Christ covers sins that are repented of and turned away from. If we find ourselves practicing unrepentant sin over and over again, then we should test ourselves to see if we are really born again.

2 Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. *Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?*

We must not be children of Light in name only. We must also be children of Light in practice.

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

To understand this verse, we have to skip ahead again to see what some say John is talking about in First John 3:7-10, that is that a Christian just does not sin. This would be those who are called “Holiness” teachers. That is not what John is talking about. We will get to that set of verses later, but this verse is written to Christians, so John is actually stating that we are all sinners. But the difference for Christians is they have forgiveness in Christ. A popular saying among Christians is, “I'm a sinner saved by grace.” But this is based on two things: Jesus' death on the cross

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to pay the penalty of sin, and our recognition of sin and repentance from it through the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:8 *When he comes (the Holy Spirit), **he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin** and righteousness and judgment...*

Unfortunately, we have many teachers today who, in one way or another, teach that Christians can no longer sin at all. These are Holiness teachers as well as strict Calvinists. The Holiness teachers claim that when you become a Christian, you no longer sin based on these same verses. But that is not what John is saying at all. In fact, this letter is addressed to Christians telling them that if they claim they no longer sin, they are deceived liars. Strict Calvinists teach this in a different way with the same outcome. They teach that once you are saved you are always saved, and that God will cause you not to sin anymore. They do not encourage Christians to repent of sin, but rather to claim the victory they have in Christ. This is not the biblical way. Christians must continue to admit they are sinners saved by grace. They must confess their sins, but the wonderful thing is, since they are believers, they have forgiveness when they confess sin.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

So Christians need to realize they are not without sin, but that they have a Savior who will forgive their sin, as opposed to unbelievers unless they come to belief on the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians must not practice sin, but rather confess sin when the Holy Spirit convicts them of it through the Word of God. Finally, they must not claim they have not sinned because that actually makes God out to be a liar. Those who claim Christians no longer sin, do not have God's Word hidden in their hearts, otherwise they would tell the truth.

Psalms 119:11 ***I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.***

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Obedience or Disobedience?

(2) 1 John 2:1-11

John continues on with his sermon on how God views these issues. Last lesson, he was talking about light and darkness and the fact that, if we are born again, we will then live in the Light, not in darkness as we did previously. In this lesson, he talks about obedience or disobedience.

***1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;
2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.***

John was an older man by the time he wrote his three letters. Perhaps not as old as during his last book, Revelation, but he is now an elder in the church and a number of the disciples have already been martyred for the Faith. John uses the term “my little children” because he is a foundational Apostle of the Church, and those to whom he is writing heard the Gospel and were disciplined through him. They were still relatively young believers in Christ.

John gives the reason for his writing this letter. “So that you may not sin.” Again, since this letter is written to Christians, this proves that Christians still sin. But as we discussed before, they are no longer bound to the habit of sin—they no longer practice sin. Instead, they have an advocate with the Father and forgiveness of sins, if they repent of them. If Christians do not repent of sin, they prove they wish to practice sin. It is only because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that we have accepted by faith, whereby we can be seen as righteous before the Father with forgiveness of sins.

***Phil. 3:9 ...and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.
2 Cor. 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He sacrificed His life for all your sins—past, present, and future. He did this for the whole world. Yet most

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of the world does not believe in Him. It is only by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ that a person can be born again and receive the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Rom. 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

What is it that we confess with our mouths? First of all, that Jesus is Lord. Second, we confess our sins.

***Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,
Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."***

When you receive the Holy Spirit, you then have the power to resist practicing sin, be convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, realize your sin, and repent of sin. The unbeliever does not have this available to him unless he or she first believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of Jesus is a once-for-all payment for the penalty of death which is the wages of sin. However, until a person believes that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be, that is, God, and recognizes, confesses, and repents (turns from) their sins, Christ's death on the cross is of no use to them. Some Universalists and others use verse two to try to claim that Christ died for the sins of the whole world, therefore, all men will be saved. That is not the case. The perfect Lamb laid down His life as a sacrifice for all, but few will believe and accept that gift. Jesus Christ only makes His children holy by His death on the cross.

Heb. 10:14 ...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

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But there is a way to tell if a person has truly believed and repented of their sins. That is, if they obey the Lord. There are many today, particularly false apostles, false teachers, false prophets, and false christs who claim, “I have come to know Him.” But it is by their obedience to the Word of God that we will know if they are telling the truth. This is the criterion for someone who is truly born again.

John 14:23-24 Jesus replied, “**If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.** My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. **He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.** These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.”

Be careful of those who claim to love the Lord when they do not obey His Word. It is one thing if they are shown that they are disobeying the Lord and they repent. But false teachers almost never repent. They believe they are above repentance. One thing I have learned about false teachers. They claim to love the Lord, but when they are confronted with their false teaching and false prophecies, they lie. Sad to say, by biblical definition, this is the mark of an unregenerate person.

It is worthy to note that John begins to lay out a fact that has been forgotten today in the churches, and which is elaborated by Paul. If a person is a clear false teacher and has been confronted with their false teaching, but does not repent of it, we are no longer to listen to that person.

Rom. 16:17 I urge you, brothers, **to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.**

But some continue to listen to false teachers saying they can “chew up the meat and spit out the bones.” It is surprising to hear them claim that when God does not view false teaching that way. He says clearly “the truth is not in them.” If they are found to be liars, then everything they do and say has lies running through it. God calls false teachers who are unregenerate and who lie “evildoers,” because they do not obey the commands of God.

Matt. 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.** Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. **Away from me, you evildoers!’”**

We know we are in the Lord if we keep His commands—obey His Word.

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Then we know that the love of God is perfect and being perfected in us. It is perfect because we are truly born again, obeying the Lord. It is being perfected because, once the Holy Spirit is in our lives and we obey Him, we will become more and more like Christ.

Phil. 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

What is this talking about? You have to go back to the preceding verse to understand that John is telling us that we need to walk in obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word just as the Son walked in obedience to the Father.

*Rom. 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so **also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.***

*Phil. 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, **he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!***

*John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will **but to do the will of him who sent me.***

If we say we abide (stay, remain) in Christ, then we will demonstrate it by walking in obedience to Jesus Christ, just as He walked in obedience to the Father.

7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

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The old commandment is the same as the new one. That is: “Obey the Word of God.” The difference in the new commandment is it that the Light is now “in you.” When the Light is in you, the darkness begins to pass away. It doesn’t all pass away instantly. It begins to pass away with the help of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and our obedience to Him. A major evidence that the Light is in us from God will be that we no longer hate our brothers. It is not clear whether John is talking about your brother being your fellow human being, or your brother being your fellow believer in Christ. Various commentators differ on this. John Gill says this refers to both. Matthew Henry says it is referring to believers only. In any case, we are sure that we are to love our brothers in Christ, and we are also not to even hate our enemies.

Matt. 5:43-45 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.** He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Notice that God has blessed all men with the benefits of life and His creation. Therefore, we must view all men with partiality. We can hate the deeds of people, but we need to keep in mind that our goal as believers is to win them to Christ.

There are a number of things God hates.

Isa. 61:8 “For I, the LORD, love justice; **I hate robbery and iniquity.** In my faithfulness I will reward them and make an everlasting covenant with them.”
Mal. 2:16 “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, **“and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,”** says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

Notice that God hates sins of various kinds, yet He still reaches out to people to save them. When we look at Islam today and all the violence they cause in the world, we can hate their worthless idol, Allah, and their “covering themselves in violence,” but we must not hate them as people. We must find ways to reach people with the Good News, especially those trapped in false religion and violence. We are also called to love our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

Gal. 5:13 You, **my brothers,** were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, **serve one another in love.**

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1 Pet. 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that **you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.***

These passages are talking about loving our brothers in Christ. So we must be careful to walk in the Light, not in the dark ways of the world—the ways of hatred and racism. In point of fact, there is no such thing as racism because we are all one blood—the human race—having come from a common set of ancestors, namely Noah and his wife and, before that, Adam and Eve. Yet hatred persists because of perceived differences in blood. If we continue to walk in those ways, we prove we are not in the body of Christ, and we are really stumbling around blind in the dark. The Light of the Lord is the Light of love. We must never forget that, especially in the times we live in. If our world is taken over by Islam, will we love our enemies, try to witness to them, and pray for them? Or will we join in the hatred and darkness of the world? That will be a major question in our generation.

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The Father or the World?

(3) 1 John 2:12-17

We have studied so far and learned that we are to walk in the Light and obey the Lord. False teachers and deceived Christians think that they can walk in some darkness and disobey the Lord sometimes, and still be in unity with Him. But that is false teaching. In this lesson, we will look at the fact that we must choose between a relationship with the Father and a relationship with the world. There is no in-between with God. We can either rightly call Him Father by becoming His children, or we can only call Him our Creator while we remain children of the world and of the devil. Skipping two lessons ahead to First John 3:10, we read this:

1 John 3:10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

John addresses the Christians he wrote this letter to as “little children” again. We are little children of God if we do what is right in the eyes of God and love our brothers in the Lord.

1 John 2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

John reminds the Christians that, if they are truly born again, they have their sins forgiven in Christ. Those who are not born again have to believe in Jesus Christ and repent of their sins to be forgiven. The sacrifice is there for them, but they have to commit to the Lord and serve Him in order for the Father to forgive them. John then writes to three groups of people, basically covering every age group in the body of Christ—the elders, the youth, and the children. This would cover both men and women, but it is important to note that men need to take special heed of this passage because they are called to be the head of their households and of the churches.

13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, be-

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cause you know the Father.

The fathers have a deeper knowledge of God. They have studied the Scriptures and been through experiences in life that have taught them about the Lord. The younger men may not have the depth of knowledge of the elders, but they have been born again and, though they still struggle with the flesh as young people do, they have overcome the evil one by repenting and turning from sin. The children have just been saved and have come to know that they have a Father in heaven. They have a long road of learning and walking with the Lord ahead of them, but they have the Father to help them.

14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

This verse seems like a repeat of verse 13, but it really isn't. He does repeat what he said to the fathers—the elders. This is to remind them that they have wisdom from God and are to help the younger Christians. Any time something is repeated in the Bible, we are to take special note of it. The fact that he repeats this message to the fathers means that they hold a greater responsibility. They must teach the younger believers, and they must lead by example. The more you know God and walk with Him, the more responsibility you have to be an example to others.

John then adds to his admonition to young men. He encourages them because they are taking a strong stance against sin. He encourages them because they have studied the Word of God and it is abiding in them. He then reminds them that it is because of their repentance and obedience to the Word of God that they are able to overcome the evil one.

1 John 5:4-5 ...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Rom. 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The progression that we see in verse 14 is really what the older fathers have already been through. We must repent of our sins and believe unto salvation. We must then fill our lives, hearts, and minds with the Word of God so that our faith will be built up and we can overcome the evil one.

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15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

This is simply one of the most direct verses in the Bible. This is a perfect way to test yourself and others to see if you are in the Faith. When I look at the money preachers on TV, I see people who call themselves lovers of the Father, but who demonstrate that they are in love with the things of this world. Again, we have to realize that he is talking about Christians who “practice” loving this world. This is why the teaching of Word of Faith teachers is so evil. They teach Christians to covet the things of this world more than the love of the Father. In fact, they claim that God wants them to have everything they want in this world. That is a lie from hell. When you see people who are focused on the things of this world—on money, culture, society, family, politics, employment, pleasure, sex, power, fame, and greed—you are seeing people who do not have the love of the Father in them. We need to test ourselves with this test. Are our lives more focused on the things of this world than on the love of the Father? If we are focused on this world, then perhaps we do not really have the love of the Father.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

These two verses could take up a whole Bible study course. John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, hits on three things in all human beings that are at the root of all sin, which are not from the Father but of the world: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This is what Satan used to snare Adam and Eve.

*Gen. 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “**Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’**” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “**You will not surely die,**” the serpent said to the woman. “**For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **Then the***

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*eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were **naked**; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and **I was afraid because I was naked**; so I hid." And he said, "**Who told you that you were naked?** Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "**The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.**" Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "**The serpent deceived me, and I ate.**"*

Right from the very beginning, we see that the three sins mentioned by John were what caused sin to come upon the whole world. First, Satan gets the woman to question God. Did He really say not to eat of that tree? Then Satan lies to Eve by telling her she will not die. Not only did Adam and Eve begin to die that day physically, they died spiritually, and sin would become their legacy to all mankind. Notice they hid from the Lord—they no longer walked with Him. But the part that shows the three sins after Satan tempted Eve are these: (1) She **"saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food"** (2) **"and pleasing to the eye"** (3) **"and also desirable for gaining wisdom."** She saw that she wanted the fruit, which was pleasing to her eyes; her flesh said it was good for food, and in her pride she wanted to be like God. There you have the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life all in one sentence. Notice what happens immediately after they disobeyed God. They hid from Him and then lied to Him. They did exactly what people do today. They tried to put the blame on someone else. Adam put the blame on Eve. Eve put the blame on the serpent. If you read on, you will discover that they all were cursed by God, starting with the serpent, then Eve, then finally Adam. The ultimate responsibility for this terrible incident that sentenced mankind and all creation with sin is laid at the feet of Adam in the Bible. He was supposed to be the leader who ultimately resisted Satan. So his sin is just as bad, yet in some ways worse, than Eve's.

On the other side of the coin, we have the story of the one Man who replaced the man of sin, Adam.

Rom. 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

There are other places in the Bible where these three basic sins of man are

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demonstrated. But there is no place more important to the salvation of men than when Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil. The amazing thing is that Satan used the same basic human sins of the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life to try to tempt Jesus in the desert.

Matt. 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

The devil started out by tempting Jesus with the lust of the flesh. Jesus was starving at the end of a 40-day fast. Yet Jesus answers Satan by quoting Scripture and not giving in to His hunger. In the second temptation, Satan tempted Jesus with the pride of life by telling Him to jump off the highest point of the Temple. This would have made a wonderful show, and the whole Jewish world would have likely crowned Him king. But then He never would have been crucified for the sins of the world. Jesus, again, overcomes this temptation by quoting Scripture. Jesus quotes the Word of God three times as an example to us. He could have simply waved His hand and disintegrated Satan with one thought. That is because He created the angel who became Satan. But He used the Word as an example for us and to show that the written Scriptures are the Word of God—His Word. We can use it to overcome the temptations of the enemy. The third temptation appeals to the lust of the eyes. Satan showed Jesus all the nations of the world, but then asked Jesus to worship him. Satan appeals to the lust of the eyes in Jesus while displaying the pride of life himself. Jesus answers a third time from the Bible with the verse that probably applies to Satan more than any verse in the Bible: *"Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only...."* Satan sinned and was cast out of

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heaven because he wanted to be worshipped there.

Isa. 14:12-15 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, (Lucifer), son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “**I will** ascend to heaven; **I will** raise my throne above the stars of God; **I will** sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. **I will** ascend above the tops of the clouds; **I will** make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.

The word for “Lucifer” in the Hebrew is *heylel* (hay-lale) meaning “light-bearer or shining one.” This is why the Bible says that Satan can appear as an angel of light.

2 Cor. 11:14 **And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.**

This is also why you must be careful not to follow false apostles today. Paul stated that they are actually ministers of Satan in the church.

2 Cor. 11:12-14 **And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.**

I have dealt with this subject before, so there’s no need to go into detail about it now. But false apostles are those who claim equal or greater authority than the true foundational apostles of the Church like Paul and John. They are liars, and are actually following in the footsteps of their father, the false god of this world.

This world is passing away. We must live that way in putting all our hopes, desires, plans, and life in the hands of our Father. If we do His will, we will live forever with Him. If we do the will of the evil one, we will exist forever where he has been sentenced for eternity.

First John Study

Truth or Lies?

(4) 1 John 2:18-25

In this lesson, we finally get to the heart of both the key to understanding First John, and a main reason he wrote this letter. We have seen so far that John has been talking about how God views life as opposed to how men view it. Men tend to rationalize things so that they can leave room for sin. God sees things as light or darkness, obedience or disobedience, as serving the Father or serving the world, and in this lesson, as truth or lies. There is no gray area in between. False teachers, those who lay error alongside truth and secretly introduce destructive heresies, always try to make lies sound like truth.

1 John 2:18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

John warns the believers, as he would warn his own children, that we are living in the last hour. The history of the earth is basically divided up into approximately three eras: The first 2,000 years are the Ancient World before the Flood, the second 2,000 years are the time of the establishment of the nation of Israel and God's covenant with Abraham before Christ, and the last 2,000 years are the times of the Gentiles who have the gift of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for the forgiveness of sin if they will believe on Him. John lived to see the beginning of the end times. John likely had no way of knowing how long this end times would last, but he was correct in stating that those he wrote to were living in the last hour. This is why we, at the end of the last hour, are very close to the return of Christ. The early church had been taught by Paul that an Antichrist was coming.

2 Thess. 2:1-4 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's

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temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

You must realize that there are people today who claim this prophecy took place in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed. But this cannot be. That is because a number of things in this prophecy did not happen yet. In the NIV, it uses the word “rebellion” and says it must come first. This is not quite as accurate a translation. The word is actually “*apostasia*” meaning “a falling away, defection and apostasy.” There was no falling away in A.D. 70, but there is today. The church is being corrupted by false teachings and people are following after false teachers, false prophets, and false christs or antichrists. Antichrist actually is “*antichristos*” which means the adversary of the Messiah or a false Christ, a pretend Messiah, who sets himself up instead of Christ, proclaiming that he is Christ. Another thing that did not fully happen was that no one set themselves up in God’s temple claiming to be God in A.D. 70. This is because if Titus, who led the Roman army to destroy Jerusalem, had claimed to be God, he would have been executed because only the Caesars of Rome could claim to be god. Some Bible scholars claim that Nero was the Antichrist, but Nero died in A.D. 68, before Jerusalem was destroyed, and never stood in the temple declaring Himself to be God. Vespasian was actually Caesar in A.D. 70, and his son, Titus, led the army to destroy Jerusalem. So it is impossible that this verse was fulfilled in A.D. 70 since Titus could not claim to be God, and Vespasian never stood in the temple in Jerusalem making this claim.

But John states that although there is an Antichrist coming in “the last hour,” there are many other antichrists who will come first. These are all types of the Antichrist to come in the last hour. Today we have many antichrists, those who claim to be little gods, little Messiahs, even the “I AM.” Here are some quotes from well-known “Christian” televangelists and cultists saying they are God.

“You don’t have a god in you, you are one” (Kenneth Copeland, “*The Force of Love*” [Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1987], audio-tape #02-0028, side 1).

“I am a little messiah walking on earth... You are a little god on earth running around” (Benny Hinn, *Praise-a-Thon* TBN, Nov. 6 1990).

“We are the essence of God, His on-going incarnation in the world” (Bishop Earl Paulk, “*Held in the Heavens*” [Atlanta: K Dimension Publishers, 1985, p. p. 125]).

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“God and man are one. Man is incarnate God” (*Sung Myung Moon of the Moonies, Christianity in Crisis*, p.5).

“The Fullness of the Godhead dwells in me...God has planned for me to be Christ's image on the earth” (Morris Cerullo from the Video “Manifest Sons of God”).

“The believer is called Christ... That’s who we are; we’re Christ!” (Kenneth M. Hagin, Zoe: “The God-Kind of Life” [Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc., 1989], 35-36, 41).

“We were created to be gods over the earth, but remember to spell it with a little “g” (Charles Capps, “Image of You” [Harrison House, 1985], p. 34).

Speaking of Adam, “I’m training a god of the earth. I got to teach him to do what I do” (Creflo Dollar, “Our Equality with God Through Righteousness”, 1/21/2001).

“Trust God. Or if you wish, trust yourself, for Thou Art God” (Neale Donald Walsch, “Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue”, Book 3, Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc., 1998; p. 350).

“I am the Christ of God” (Charles Fillmore, “Statements for the Realization of the Son of God”, *Christian Healing*).

“The divine name from Exodus 3:14, “I Am who I Am,” is appropriated by Jesus who shows us how to embrace our own divinity. The Cosmic Christ is the “I am” in every creature” (Matthew Fox, “The Coming of the Cosmic Christ”, p.154).

“Within all men sits a God. That God is your true Self” (Maitreya, “Messages”, p. 110).

So we know that this is the last hour—the last era of the world—because many antichrists have already come, and one final Antichrist is coming. The antichrists, those who went out from the true church because they are rejected as heretics by according to the written Word and true believers, started back in the first century.

19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went

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out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Those who deny one or more of the core doctrines of the Christian Faith are those who have departed from the Faith. The fact is, they never really believed the same things we believed, they were only pretenders. Unfortunately, today, because Christians are not rejecting heretics as they did in the first century churches, we now have antichrists that have full access to the churches. This is why we are in a time of falling away. Those who are true believers remain with true believers. Those who are not, depart from the core doctrines of the Faith, and then try to get people to follow them. Beware of those who proselytize or try to get Christians out of their current fellowship into another. False teachers like Benny Hinn and others on TV are simply trying to get followers to themselves, thus going against God's established way of having local churches.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

This is an extremely important point, just as important as it was in the first century. We have to realize that we already have the Anointing of Christ, the indwelling Holy Spirit. We already know Him. Beware of false prophets and false christs who come along and claim that you don't have the anointing but that they can lay their hands on you and give you an anointing to do miracles or be a foundational apostle or prophet. There is only one anointing that God gives you when you are born again. Those who come along and claim to be able to impart an anointing are those who have departed from the Faith. This is how you can test them. Yet many Christians are deceived by the claims of a transferable impartation of some kind of "anointing" today, and then end up following false teachers. If you follow me in my car, you will end up at my intended destination. If you follow a false prophet or false teacher, you will end up where they are going.

Jer. 27:15 "‘have not sent them,’ declares the LORD. ‘They are prophesying lies in my name. Therefore, I will banish you and you will perish, both you and the prophets who prophesy to you.’”

21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

This is a key to understanding the book of First John. Christians know the truth, so why would they follow false teachers? Christians ought to know, because they already have the indwelling Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Truth. They should know that there is no such thing as truth that has lies

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in it. To God, there is only truth. Yet, today, people think they can listen to and believe in half-truths filled with lies and still have a relationship with God. But if you have the indwelling Holy Spirit because you are born again, lies should cause you repulsion (Jer. 23:13). They should make you sick in your spirit and conscience. No true believer can sit and listen to lies coming from alleged “Christians” on TV or in their church, and not have to reject and confront those lies. Lies need to be challenged, and unrepentant liars need to be rejected. We need to stay away from and not listen to those who lay error alongside truth.

*2 Pet. 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. **They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.***

One sure way to test if a person is a false teacher is to see if they are denying the Lord in some way.

***22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.
23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.***

There are many liars today who deny the biblical definition of Jesus Christ in some way. There are two criteria for exposing an antichrist that John gives us here: (1) They deny Jesus is the Christ, and (2) they deny the Father and the Son. Many cults and false religions today deny that Jesus is the Christ: Judaism, Hinduism, Islam (Jesus is only a lower prophet), Buddhism, Bahai—actually all religions except for Christianity. Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox affirm this in their creeds, but they also teach that Jesus is put to death again each time they celebrate the Eucharist, which denies that Jesus Christ is 100% man, having died once for all, and who, in His glorified resurrection body, is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Cults also reject Jesus Christ, such as Jehovah Witnesses (Jesus is Michael), Mormons (Jesus is the brother of Lucifer, anyone could attain to be as Jesus was), old Worldwide Church of God, Christian Science (Jesus is only an “anointed” human and demonstrated “Christ consciousness” as a human only), Christadelphians, any Gnostic groups (Jesus is spirit only), Scientology, Iglesia Ni Cristo (Christ is a man only), Unitarians, Unity (Jesus is the best manifestation of the Divine Mind), etc. However, by what they teach about Christ, many people who pretend to be true believers also reject Jesus Christ. Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, and many others teach that Jesus was just an anointed man during all or part of His

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life on earth, that He died spiritually on the cross, and that **His** physical death did not provide salvation. Any teachers who treat Jesus like a vending machine for health and wealth, deny that Jesus Christ is Lord. Any prophets who see false visions of Jesus proven by Scriptural model, are teaching another “Jesus.” When Third Wave teachers chant “more Jesus,” Jesus is treated as a substance instead of a person, thus promoting a form of pantheism. Their alleged visions of Jesus often redefine the scriptural picture of Jesus. Kenneth Copeland denigrates Jesus' death, and he has even taught that Jesus is the brother of Satan, as do the Mormons. I saw this on a video tape recently where Copeland was doing a play in which he was playing Jesus and another man was playing Satan. At the end where Jesus is supposed to destroy Satan, Copeland, as Jesus, hugs the man playing Satan and calls him his brother.

There is also another way to tell an antichrist false teacher. That is if they deny the Trinity—denying the Father and the Son. All false religions that do not believe in the Trinity include: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Bahai, Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox. Catholicism is close to confusing the Trinity by adding Mary as co-redemptrix with Christ, and is already teaching this concept in their prayers, novenas, Catechism, and with paintings showing Mary as part of the Godhead. Cults would include Jehovah Witnesses (denial of the person of the Holy Spirit as “God's active force”), Mormons (God is an “exalted man” with a body), old Worldwide Church of God, Christian Science (who teach that the Trinity suggests “polytheism”), Iglesia Ni Cristo (Christ is a man only), Scientology, Unification Church (the Trinity is man, woman, and God; Jesus married the Holy Spirit), United Pentecostal Church and Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (Non-Trinity; Jesus only), Unitarians, Unity (God is not a being, but a force), United Church of Jesus Christ, many Apostolic Churches, and any churches descending from William Branham and Azusa Street “Oneness” Pentecostals (Trinity is a doctrine of demons; Jesus only).

But there are also those who claim to be true Christians today, such as Benny Hinn, who at one time claimed that God is a nine-part God. Some of them may claim to believe in the Trinity, but you have to see what they actually teach. When the Spirit is treated as a substance, both Deity and personality is denied. When God is “on call,” Deity is compromised and God is blasphemed. Many of the manifestations in Hinn and other Third Wave meetings as a result of “slain in the spirit” antics, lower man to beastly or sub-human levels. The Spirit's actions always raise man to the character of Jesus Christ. Thus, to call these manifestations the work of the Spirit, is a (not “the”) blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

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We need to be especially aware that many false teachers are saying today that Muslims worship the same God as Christians. A new movement in many liberal denominations called “Chrislam” bears this out. But that is impossible, because the Qur’an says:

They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them (Qur’an [005.073]).

"Say He is God, the One and Only God, the, Eternal, Absolute. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him!" (Qur’an [112:1-4]).

It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and it is (Qur’an [019.035]).

The Qur’an is clear—Islam teaches that God has no Son. They go on to say that Jesus Christ was only a prophet, and not even as great as Mohammed, and that Christ was not really crucified. You can be sure that *“Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.”* If you do not have the Son, you have no way to have a relationship with God.

24 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.
25 This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

To combat this apostasy that has come on the world because many anti-christs who have gone out, we need to abide or stay in the teachings that we have heard from Jesus Christ and the Apostles. That means we stick with what the Bible teaches. When some new teaching comes along that does not square with the Bible, we reject that teaching and admonish those teaching it to stop. If they do not repent and stop, we are to avoid them, warning others. How important is this type of discernment and abiding? If biblical teaching abides in us, then we abide in the Son and in the Father. Does it matter what you believe? Can you mix truth with lies? Not according to God. God has promised us that, if we continue believing what we have been taught by Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and prophets in the Bible, we will have eternal life. “Oh, but I thought I only had to believe in Jesus Christ to have eternal life?” Of course! But what if someone

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comes along and corrupts your belief system, and you end up believing something else, thus believing in vain?

2 Cor. 11:4 *For if someone comes to you and **preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.***

1 Cor. 15:2 ***By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.***

So, contrary to what many Third Wave heretics teach today, doctrine does matter. What you believe has everything to do with whether or not you will have eternal life. The Bible is clear, though many today do not want to hear—we must abide in Christ to have Christ, and thus have eternal life.

First John Study

Abide or Shrink Away?

(5) 1 John 2:26-3:3

Fake Injury

F. E. Smith was a capable lawyer with a quick wit who served as the British attorney general from 1915 until 1919. On one occasion he cross-examined a young man claiming damages for an arm injury caused by the negligence of a bus driver.

“Will you please show us how high you can lift your arm now?” asked Smith. The young man gingerly raised his arm to shoulder level, his face distorted with pain.

“Thank you,” said Smith. “And now, could you show us how high you could lift it before the accident?” The young man eagerly shot his arm up above his head.

He lost the case (Today in the Word, July 1995, p. 27).

There seems to be no end to people who want to deceive others for the purpose of stealing or gaining the upper hand. The world is full of people who use deception on a daily basis in business and in politics. But deception can also come into the churches, particularly in our day when Christians are taught not to be discerning. You say, “That is not true.” Oh, really? Have you ever heard teachers telling you not to judge based on Matthew 7:1? When you apply that verse to everything, you have the foundation of most deception gaining a foothold in churches today.

1 John 2:26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

You may remember in the previous lessons we learned that John was writing his letter to Christians so that they may not sin, and to remember that our sins are forgiven in Christ as we confess them because we have been justified by the Father through the Son. Wherever there is the promise of a blessing in the Bible, there is usually a word of warning. Now John tells us he is also writing to warn Christians about those who try to deceive them. You mean Christians can be deceived? Of course they can, if they are not studying and applying the Word of God to their lives through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie,

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and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

There is much talk today by false teachers about all kinds of anointings. That is because they don't understand what the Anointing does. There is only one Anointing, that is the Anointing of the Anointed one, Jesus Christ.

God is the One who gives the Anointing (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

2 Cor. 1:21-22 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come...

There is only one Anointing (1 John 2:20), the Anointing of the Anointed One (Psalm 2:2; Acts 4:2) Jesus Christ the King of kings. When a person is born again, they are anointed by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13), foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified (Rom. 8:29-30). We share in Christ's anointing through the Holy Spirit when we believe He is God and He died and rose from the dead.

Tit. 3:4-7 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

No one can or should try to transfer the Holy Spirit to another person, as the Anointing is the **person** of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18; Titus 3:5), the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This is what makes slain in the spirit not only unbiblical, but dangerous.

Contrary to what many popular heretics preach today about anointings, John actually tells us that the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which all true believers have, should keep them away from following false teachers. Notice John says "you have no need for anyone to teach you." This is not referring to true teachers—we should listen to them when they are teaching correctly from the Bible. This is warning against false teachers who come in with new ideas and new anointings that are not in line with the Word or the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our true teacher. Notice that the Anointing

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abides in us, but we must also abide in Him. The Anointing is the Person of the Holy Spirit, who is God. We must remain in Him, in His Word, not in the new revelations and new false anointings of false teachers. There were false teachers then, and there are false teachers today, as well. Notice also how John states that the anointing, the Holy Spirit, is truth and not lies. That is because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

John 14:17 ...the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

John 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me."

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

1 John 4:6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

There is no lie in the truth. There is no lie in the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Truth—will guide us into all truth. When you see and hear lies in the name of the Lord, you are seeing and hearing false teachers who do not have a relationship with the Spirit of Truth. Yes, true teachers can make mistakes teaching. When they make a bad mistake publicly, they need to tell people they made a mistake by confessing it. That is what true teachers do. False teachers, when confronted with false teaching, do not repent but rather continue to teach the same lies.

We are to abide in the Holy Spirit. Yet Christians can shrink away. The Bible says we can shrink away from the truth and be destroyed.

*Heb. 10:39 But we are not of those **who shrink back and are destroyed**, but of those who believe and are saved.*

But in John, he also says that if we listen to false teachers instead of the Holy Spirit, we may end up shrinking away from Jesus Christ when He returns to earth bodily to rule and judge. So there can be a shrinking away in the life of a Christian to the point where, on the day when Jesus returns, we shrink away in shame from Him because we know we are under judgment.

29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also

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who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Here again we have the word “practice.” We have studied before that unbelievers practice sin. If a believer finds himself making a lifestyle out of sinning, then he is no better than an unbeliever. But Christians ARE to practice righteousness. In fact, any Christian who does not practice righteousness proves they are not born of Him. That means, as we grow in grace, as we grow to maturity in Christ, we will be seen by other Christians and the world as practicing righteousness. That means we stand up for what is right, live right, tell the truth, and strive to live more and more like Christ.

False teachers do not practice righteousness. This is another test John has put before us to help us spot false brethren. Those who claim to be true teachers will be righteous people. True teachers teach the truth, and live the truth. They don’t live like the world, they live as a witness of Christ to the world.

1 John 3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

There is a song with the words from the first part of verse one. That song is good as far as it goes but, as usual, it leaves out some harsh facts. We like our songs to be light, airy, and happy in church today. But the next sentence spells out the horrible facts. The next sentence is what we ought to sing and remind ourselves about daily. The Father has blessed us, we are His children, and we have known the love of God. But should we gloat about that when the world does not know God? We need to be reminded, particularly today when there is false teaching stating that every culture in the world already knew God and was worshipping Him in their own way before the Gospel was preached to them. The world does not know the children of God because the world does not know God. This should spur us on, like it has in past generations, to get the Good News out. However, what I see are false teachers busy going all over the world telling people they are already worshipping the true “God” in their culture, and then translating the Bible, substituting the name of some local deity for YHWH. That is not evangelism—it is an excuse to do nothing. Even

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worse, it is blasphemy. We have a message to bring to the world.

*Rom. 10:14-15 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? **As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”***

We have a blessed hope. We will be like He is! John says we don't really know what that will be like, but we do know that when He appears we will be like Him because we will look upon His face and see Him as He is. Anyone who has this hope—the hope of glory—will grow in righteousness and purity. But our hope must be “fixed” on Him. If our hopes and dreams are fixed on something else, on the world, on our culture, on false promises from false religions and mythologies, on the stars, or on people, we will not be pure. Impurity leads to sin, and sin to death.

First John Study

New Life or Sin?

(6) 1 John 3:4-10

I want to remind you of what we have already learned about the issue of sinning and practicing sin. To practice means to rehearse something until you can do it perfectly. When you practice for a play, for instance, you go over and over your lines and movements on stage until you have them memorized. At some point, since you have rehearsed so many times, the lines and movements become almost automatic. You no longer have to think hard to remember what to do but you simply do them instinctually. I studied theatre and drama in college, and directed, starred in, and built sets for a number of plays during those years. One time I forgot my lines during a play. We always had a person at the side of the stage who would have a script and could prompt a person if they forgot their lines. I walked over to that side of the stage, acting like it was all part of the staging, until I heard my lines. Once I heard them, it got me back on track and the rest of the performance was automatic. If you are a Christian and you fall into sin, or you commit an unintentional sin, since you have a sacrifice that washes away your sins, you can repent of that sin and the Lord Jesus Christ promised He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That is not available to an unbeliever until they believe that Jesus Christ is God, that He rose from the dead, and is alive today. But if you are a Christian and you continually live in sin or a sin is your lifestyle, then you are practicing sin. At that point, there is no difference between you and an unbeliever unless you repent. So we have to understand that John is not saying a Christian never sins. He is saying that a Christian no longer practices (rehearses) sin but, rather, he practices righteousness. A Christian wants to be righteous, so he learns to be righteous and practices it by being who God wants Him to be.

1 John 3:4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

Jesus Christ appeared and was sent to earth to become a man in order that He might die as the perfect blood sacrifice for our sins. Yet there was no sin in Him. He was the perfect, spotless, blameless Lamb of God. Because of His death on the cross, only He can take away our sins. But those who

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practice sin are lawless. People don't understand today that sinning is being a rebel. Our rebellion leads us to do what we want in opposition to the will of God. That is lawlessness—being outside the Law of God.

Heb. 10:16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. **I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.**"

The Law of Christ is now written on the hearts and minds of believers, but if they practice lawlessness and sin, they prove they are not really believers. The lawless and disobedient are condemned along with the lawless one.

Eph. 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, **the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, **we were by nature objects of wrath.**

2 Pet. 3:17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, **be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.**

2 Thess. 2:3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs **and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.**

Let us be sure we are walking in obedience to Christ, not taken away by lawless men.

6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

So now we have a framework to understand this often misunderstood

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passage. John is talking to Christians. But he is not stating that Christians never sin. Remember what we read in a previous lesson:

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Holiness teachers who claim people become completely holy and without sin when they become Christians are deceiving themselves and truth is not in them.

*The Holiness Movement was in many ways a reaction to the dead orthodoxy and lifeless spirituality that infiltrated so much of Christianity during the nineteenth-century. However, its remedy, **a second blessing resulting in the eradication of sinful tendencies and a higher life** not available to the unbaptized, went beyond the teaching of Scripture. As is often the case in reactionary movements, the cure may be as bad as the disease ("The Holiness Movement," Gary Gilley, *Think on These Things*, December 2004 - Volume 10, Issue 12).*

Manifest Sons of God teachers who claim that we will become perfect before Christ's second coming are deceivers. They even have the audacity to claim we will not die. *Jesus Christ conquered death individually, but it is left to the church to conquer death on a corporate basis. Is it possible that there will be a people who so possess the authority of Almighty God, as Elijah did, that they, as a group, will say to death, hell, and the spirit of Satan, 'We will NOT die. We will stay here and be changed, and we will call Jesus Christ to return to this earth as King of kings and Lords of lords'? Yes, that is what I believe the church must do! (Earl Paulk, "The Proper Function of the Church" [Atlanta: K Dimension Publishers, undated], p.13).*

All false teaching! But what John is saying is the person who abides in Christ and does not practice sin, but rather practices righteousness, is seen by God as one who does not sin. Those who continue to practice sin prove they are not redeemed. Abiding in Christ means to stay there in Christ. But many today are standing up and walking out on Christ in their lives. They live a lifestyle of sin, practicing sin over and over again, and expect to have God save them. But if you practice sin, it is clear you have not seen or known Jesus Christ, or understood the nature and penalty of sin.

Jam. 1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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Sin can grow. James was also talking to Christians because, in non-Christians, sin has never been stopped. For a Christian, our past sins have been forgiven and we have a way to conquer sin because of Jesus Christ.

But John goes on to make it very clear. The person who practices righteousness is righteous. The person who practices sin is a sinner. When we talk about practicing righteousness, we are not talking about faking it or putting on a show as the Pharisees did. We are talking about true righteousness, the kind that is from the inward man, the kind that stands for truth no matter if anyone else does. We are talking about the true fruit of the Spirit being evident on a continuing basis in their life. The man who practices sin is actually of the devil, especially the false teachers John has warned us about. But anyone who lives a life of lawlessness is a son of the lawless one, and will get the same eternal punishment as their father, the devil. The choice is clear: Either follow Jesus Christ, or follow Satan. If you stay the same way you were, then you are following in the footsteps of Adam and Eve who rebelled under the teaching of Satan.

The only way to become a child of God is to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ when the Holy Spirit convicts you of your sin and shows you that Jesus Christ is the Son of God—then abide in Him! The whole reason Jesus Christ had to be born a man was to die in order to do away with the penalty for sin, death, and the devil. When we are born again, God plants a seed in us. That seed is the seal of the Holy Spirit. Once we are born again and that seed is planted, it will grow if we abide in Christ, therefore we will no longer practice sin. That is because we now have an Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1) and forgiveness of sins when we confess them (1 John 1:9).

There are two sure ways to tell who is a child of God and who is a child of the devil. Don't let anyone tell you that you cannot tell who is walking with the Lord and who is not. (1) Those who do not practice righteousness are not of God. (2) Those who do not love their brothers are not of God. We have already covered point number one, but we must think a little bit about point number two. There are people who call themselves Christians who make a big show out of "loving" their brothers, giving to the poor, praying, and fasting for days on end, etc. However, if you show them that they are teaching false teachings or making false prophecies, you will find out just how much they love their brothers. I have received some of the angriest emails you can possibly imagine from people who call themselves believers. When challenged with their lies, they come back with name-calling, filthy language, threats of bodily harm, threats of lawsuits, false cursing prophecies, and incredible

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anger. At that point, it is easy for me to tell where they are coming from. Any true Christian, when confronted with sin and proven so according to the Bible, will be quick to recognize it and repent. Those who are not true Christians become angry and hostile and remain unrepentant because of their self-righteousness. But telling people the truth in love is one of the most loving things you can do for them as a brother in the Lord. *“Truth is seen as ‘unloving’ only by those who are convicted by it...and yet refuse to listen and repent.”*

First John Study

Love or Hate? - Part One

(7) 1 John 3:11-24

Another test to see if you, or anyone else, is in the Faith is to see if we love one another—love our brothers in the Lord. Now this is talking about true brothers and sisters in the Lord, not false teachers, because we are to reject them as heretics (Titus 3:10), though we are not to hate the enemies of Christ but pray for them. We must love one another because Jesus Christ first loved us before we ever loved Him. Our love for the Lord and His Church is also a witness to the world.

1 John 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Right from the beginning of the Church, which Jesus Christ established, He told us to love one another.

John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

We must not be like Cain who was blessed to be the first son born of a man and woman on earth, yet he became jealous of his brother Abel and murdered him. Cain did not love his brother more than himself. When Cain disobeyed God by offering a sacrifice that could not atone for sins because there could be no shedding of blood, Cain got angry at his brother instead of repenting to God. God had made the first sacrifice for the sin of Adam and Eve by shedding the blood of animals and providing clothing for Adam and Eve, just as He later made the first perfect sacrifice through His Son to atone for all sin.

Gen. 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Those who hate and murder are “of the evil one.” This is why, today, you can be sure that the “evil one” is behind the hatred and murder that Islam

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is perpetrating around the world. But to hate your brother and entertain thoughts of murder is evil.

Matt. 5:21-24 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But **I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.** Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. **Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.**"

This teaching from Jesus Christ harkens back to Cain. If Cain had left his offering at the altar and gone to Abel and confessed his anger at God's acceptance of Abel's sacrifice and not his own, then the first murder on this earth may not have happened. But Cain held a grudge against his brother, which became anger, and then became malice, and finally ended in murder. If you practice hatred, malice, and anger against someone long enough, that often leads to violence. This is why we must forgive one another as the Lord has forgiven us. Cain tried to blame Abel for his disobedience. The reason he killed Abel was because Cain's deeds were evil and Abel's were good. To top off the murder of his brother, Cain then lied to the Lord by telling God he did not know where his brother was.

13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.
14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.
15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

The world follows in the steps of Cain. They hate righteousness and are jealous of it. They know somewhere down deep inside that what they do is evil, that they do not measure up, and so they cannot stand those who obey the Lord. This is why false teachers show so much hatred of those who try to bring them out of heresy. If you are a true follower of Christ living in obedience to the Holy Spirit, the Bible is clear that you will be hated by the world. False teachers are of the world.

You also know that you have salvation and have passed from death to life, if you love your brothers. If you harbor hatred of your brothers, you are still dead in your sins. You must either abide in the Holy Spirit, or abide in death. Everyone who hates is doing naturally, in the old man, what the

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first son, Cain, did. They are murderers at heart, and they do not have eternal life. If you practice hatred, you are no better than an unbeliever.

This kind of hatred and malice is a big problem around the world. We must, as true believers, teach people not to take vengeance against people they hate.

Rom. 12:19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

If wrongs have been done to you, your friends, or family, then you must realize that, if you are a Christian and, if the person who did those things is not repentant, the Lord will repay. We must forgive and move on. That is the righteous way to deal with that kind of situation. We must also not harbor hatred in our hearts towards our brothers and sisters in the Lord because the Lord blesses them with material possession and we remain poor. We need to be glad for them, instead of coveting the blessings they have been given and then finally allowing jealousy to turn into hatred.

16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

This is a main principle. If you are not willing to lay down your life for someone, then you probably don't love them enough. Laying down your life can mean the ultimate sacrifice of your life in death, but it can also mean laying down your own hopes, dreams, and desires to help others. Missionaries often lay down their lives to go to the mission field to serve others. I am often saddened to see that there are still many places in the world, some close to where we live, that have not had the Gospel brought to them. We need to check to see that we are willing to lay down our lives in the service of Him who laid down His life for us.

17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

We need to turn our words of love and kindness into real action. There are many people who are in need around us and throughout the world. We need to start with those who are in need in the church and help them. We are to share our blessings among the brethren.

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Acts 4:32 *All the believers were one in heart and mind. **No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.***

This concept is even in some cultures, in particular, some island cultures. Everything belongs to the community. This is a biblical concept. We need to stop holding on so tightly to our money and possessions that we are unable to help others. How can the love of God abide in us if we see a brother or sister in dire need and do not try to help them with the blessings God has given us that rightfully belong to Him? Sometimes, individually, we may not have the means to help a person, but we certainly do collectively. Let our actions speak louder than words on this issue.

19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him

20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;

Notice that assurance of salvation and the blessings of God come from our love for our brothers and sisters in the Lord and the reality of our actions. Then our hearts will be “assured” before Him. The Holy Spirit, when indwelling a true believer, will cause our hearts—our conscience—to assure or condemn us. The Spirit of Truth works to sharpen and use the conscience of the believer in order to help us to grow in righteousness. We can be assured that God is greater than we are and sees what is in our hearts. God knows all things. That can be a comfort for some, but also something that makes others fear. It can be a comfort when you know you have done what you can for someone and have shown compassion and love, yet you may not receive praise for it. God sees it and will reward accordingly.

Eph. 6:8 *...because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.*

God also sees our bad motives and convicts us of them. We must come to confess our sinful motives before Him. Otherwise, we know that those who have wrong motives will not be rewarded of the Lord.

Prov. 16:2 *All a man's ways seem innocent to him, **but motives are weighed by the LORD.***

1 Cor. 4:5 *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord*

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comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

If your heart, as a believer, does not condemn you, then you have the confidence that the Lord is pleased with what you are doing. This does not apply to people (even those who call themselves followers of Christ) whose consciences have been seared. They no longer have the capacity to understand the difference between good and evil, and so their consciences tell them nothing, or mislead them.

1 Tim. 4:2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

I see this often in churches today. I wrote a letter to a well-known pastor of a big church in Honolulu and asked him why he was bringing false prophets and heretics to the Hawaiian Islands who don't teach the Trinity of God. He never responded to me because his conscience has been seared. Any true believer would have repented of bringing heretic after heretic out to these islands. But he actually thinks he is doing a good thing. This is because he no longer has a conscience that works since he has disobeyed the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word so often that he no longer cares about what is truth or lies. This is just one example among thousands I could give you today. Be careful that you do not allow your conscience to be burned to a crisp by false teachers or by practicing sin.

22 ...and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

When our consciences are clear and we are doing what we do out of love for our brothers, then we can ask and God will answer our requests. False teachers just say you can ask God and He has to give you what you want because of some kind of made up "covenant" of blessings, which are usually based on promises in the Old Testament to Israel. But asking, seeking, and knocking have criteria in the New Testament. This is one of them—that we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. If we are doing those things, then we will know by the following things: (1) Being already involved in the Lord's work, (2) obeying what He asks us to do in His Word and what He leads us to do in our hearts/consciences, and (3) doing what is pleasing to Him. At that point, we will already be in line with His will, and our asking is a simple matter of reminding God of His faithfulness and His promises, and

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petitioning Him to stand by His Word and fulfill His will in the earth.

23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

What is the main commandment we are to follow? It is the same commandment as the commandment that sums up the law and the prophets.

*Matt. 22:37-40 Jesus replied: “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to believe that He is Lord—that He is God. We must love Him with all our hearts, and then because we love Him, we begin to love our brothers as ourselves. This is the core of all the commandments, and this is the main point of what John means when he talks about obeying the commands of the Lord.

John lays it on the line. The person who obeys the Lord abides in Him. The person who does not obey the Lord does not abide in Him. We know He abides in us because we abide in Him by keeping His commandments, and by the Spirit who indwells us and confirms to us that we are abiding in Him. Because we have this relationship with the Creator of this universe, who is now our Father, we can have confidence and assurance of salvation, as well as the fact that God will hear our prayers and answer.

First John Study

Christ or Antichrist?

(8) 1 John 4:1-6

Now we come to the meat of John's first letter. What John has taught us so far is leading us to the warning—a warning that is in almost every other book of the New Testament. It is the warning for Christians to be discerning, to test the spirits, to judge rightly with regards to false christs, false teachers, and false prophets.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Christians are not to just blindly believe everything. They are to test everything and hold on to the good (1 Thess. 5:21). Christians today are taught, either overtly or covertly, to believe any person who calls themselves a believer and talks about Jesus. But as we will see in a moment, it matters WHAT that person is saying about Jesus. There are many who proclaim the name of Christ today, but relatively few who are doing it according to the Word of God.

The reason we are not to believe everything that is taught or prophesied is because there is a spirit behind false teaching and false prophecy. We often don't think in those terms. But just as there is a Spirit of truth, who is the Holy Spirit, there is also a spirit of error (1 John 4:6). The spirit behind those who lie is not the Holy Spirit, but the spirit of the antichrist. This is why we must test the spirits to see if they are from God. Do they proclaim Christ correctly—that He is 100% God and 100% man for all eternity? Do they uphold the core doctrine of the Trinity? Do they claim the Word of God as their ultimate authority? Do they teach that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? Do they teach that Jesus Christ is coming back to earth to rule and judge?

Why must we test the spirits? Notice that we test the spirits. We don't judge a man by how well he speaks, how many followers he has, or his claims of being able to do miracles. We test the spiritual aspect of what he is saying and doing. To do that, we have to carefully compare his deeds and actions to the Word of God. Why do we do this? Because starting as early as the first century when John was writing this letter, MANY false

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prophets had gone out into the world. I am not sure how John would say this in our day, but I can only guess that he might say to us that THOUSANDS of false prophets have gone out today. Christendom has been flooded and overtaken by false prophets. Almost everything you hear on TV and the internet today is from THOUSANDS of false prophets. When we test them and challenge them that what they are saying are lies, the spirit of error comes out in anger rather than the Spirit of Truth, who I believe is still trying to convict them.

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

One test of a false prophet is what they teach about Jesus Christ. They must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and that He came in the flesh. Another way of putting this is that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human, having added humanity to His being when He was born of Mary. This is called the Hypostatic Union. Both concepts of Deity and humanity must be taught as equally coexistent. Otherwise, you have the spirit of error. In fact, you have the teaching of antichrist if the Deity/humanity of Christ is not taught. Jesus Christ was preexistent to this universe, yet He came down to earth to become a man. At no time did He give up His Deity, but He submitted His Deity to the will of the Father and became a man.

What this verse is not teaching is, anyone who declares Jesus Christ was born a man is from God. Kenneth Copeland's motto is, "Jesus Is Lord," yet he teaches that Jesus Christ gave up His Deity until He was baptized, and then He became an anointed man just like any other Christian. In fact, Copeland claims he could have died for the sins of the world because he is exactly like Christ. Copeland claims that Jesus Christ was taken to hell and tortured by Satan and then was born again in hell. This is the spirit of error, the spirit of antichrist—not the spirit of God. Yet it fools people. The spirit of antichrist tries to pass itself off as the true Spirit of Truth. That is the nature of antichrist or a false Christ.

In the NIV, verse three reads like this:

*1 John 4:3 ...and every spirit that does not **confess Jesus** is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.*

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In the NKJV, verse three reads like this:

*1 John 4:3 ...and every spirit that does not **confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh** is not of God.*

The phrase “confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” was left out of the Ethiopian, Alexandrian, and Latin Vulgate, but John Gill states that you get the context by looking at verse two. So both versions are correct, but the versions like the NASB and NIV that only say “confess Jesus” have unfortunately been misinterpreted in modern times to mean that if anyone names the name of Jesus then they are of God. This is not true. All you have to do is look at Islam that names Jesus as a Prophet, but does not believe that He is God. Mormonism names Jesus but believes He is the brother of Lucifer. Jehovah’s Witnesses name Jesus but believe he is the Archangel Michael. We also have many wolves in Christianity like Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, and a whole host of other Word of Faith teachers who teach that Jesus Christ was not God from His birth until he was baptized, was tortured in hell by Satan, and that every Christian is the “I AM” or a god.

The spirit of antichrist is not only coming in the future with the coming of the one final Antichrist—the embodiment of Satan himself—but is already in the world. It has been in the world since Christ ascended into heaven. This is a spirit who tries to act like he is Christ, a religious spirit. This is the spirit that causes people to unite for world global government, to save the planet, etc. It is the same spirit that unites churches to come together to take over the systems of government of the world, and yet harbor false prophets and false apostles. This is the Zeitgeist, the Weltgeist, the spirit of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), a different spirit (2 Cor. 11:4), the evil spirit (Rev. 18:2).

4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

The difference between those who play at Christianity, and yet are driven by the spirit of error, and true believers is that we are from God. We have God living in us through His Spirit. We are His children. You cannot be a child of God and be a liar and have another spirit. Because of the fact that

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we are in Christ, we have already overcome those who oppose us. We have the power to overcome the antichrist spirit and those who follow him. Why? Because we remain in the faith and faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

Acts 14:22 ...strengthening the disciples and **encouraging them to remain true to the faith.** "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Heb. 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, **let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.**

Tit. 1:9 **He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.**

1 John 5:4-5 ...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. **This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.** Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

The One who is in us is greater than the world, the flesh, and the devil. He is greater on two counts. First, He created all these things. Second, He redeemed all flesh who would believe, and He conquered sin, death, and the devil on the cross. He will return to take back the world He created from the clutches of the false god of this age—Satan (2 Cor. 4:4).

The difference between true believers and those who follow false prophets is that they are in league with the world. They are from the world, they made a profession of faith, but they went back to the world by practicing sin without repentance. This is why they speak as the world speaks, and the world listens to them.

Pay close attention to this bit of wisdom. You will see false Christians who claim the proof that they are doing the Lord's work is the size of their churches or the size of their signs and wonders meetings. But the truth is, what they say and do appeals to the world, so the world is happy with them and will come to their meetings by the millions. I saw a video of one of Reinhard Bonnke's "Signs And Wonders" crusades in Nigeria. I already knew that sixteen people were trampled to death at that crusade where there were reported to be a million people in attendance. Bonnke was actually banned from Nigeria for many years because of those irresponsible deaths. But now he is bragging about those meetings on his website and in a video series. But why do you think so many were coming? Was it because they came to hear the Gospel message and discover that they are sinners in need of repentance? Was it because they wanted to hear that the wages of sin is death and that they are headed to hell? People don't come

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in large groups to hear that message—not these days. What they come for is a good show, especially if it involves promises of healing and miracles. What we see at Bonnke crusades is a lot of hype but no real presentation of the full Gospel facts. Even if some of the truth of the Gospel is presented, when the altar call is given, those truths are wiped out by the lying signs and wonders of “slain in the spirit,” false prophecies, false teachings, and failed promises of healing made by Bonnke. He is just one of many false prophets at work today who use these methods, which would include Benny Hinn and thousands of others.

The difference is stark with true believers. Few will listen to the truth about sin, death, and the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Matt. 7:14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Those who have the spirit of error will not listen to true believers. I can testify to this many thousands of times over in my web ministry. When people who call themselves believers will not listen to the truth, but instead continue on in sin, then that is a test. They have failed the test, not according to me, but according to the Word of God which commands us to test them. Those who will not listen to the Word of God, taught and demonstrated by believers, prove they are not from God. When they don't listen, when they refuse to repent, when they continue on in heresy and false prophesy after they have been admonished and rebuked numerous times—this is how we can tell the difference between the spirit of truth or the spirit of error.

Don't ever let a so-called Christian tell you not to judge and apply that to everything. The Bible is clear that we are to test and to make a determination whether or not a person is who they say they are. Why? Because we are to protect the Church against the spirit of antichrist, and we are to keep the purity of God's Word so that we can continue to be light and salt to the world. I'm afraid Christianity has almost lost the battle because we have allowed false prophets to speak for the Church to the world. They have brought the truth into disrepute.

2 Pet. 2:1-2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

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This is the sad reality of our times. The only thing left is for those of us who remain standing in the Lord to rise up and fight against this tide of apostasy of the end times for the sake of Christ.

2 Thess. 2:3 *Let no man deceive you by any means: **for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first**, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.. (KJV).*

It is clear that we are already in that time of falling away—the time of apostasy. Will Jesus Christ find faith on the earth when He returns (Luke 18:8)? That question is left up to us, those who ARE from God and who hold to His Word and the glory of His Name!

First John Study

Love or Fear?

(9) 1 John 4:7-18

The natural product of being a true child of God is that we no longer live under the spirit of fear but of Sonship.

Rom. 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, <“Abba,”> Father.”

False prophets are still living in the spirit of fear. But we will cover that in a moment.

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

As we discovered in a former lesson in First John, true believers are known by their love of God and love for one another. Love is from God because God is love. Therefore the one who claims to love God will love His brother. If he does not, he proves he does not know God. The world does not know God, thus they do not know love.

*Gal. 4:8 Formerly, **when you did not know God**, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.*

Those who do not know God are serving other gods—especially themselves and the devil. God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to be rejected by men and die a humiliating lonely death on a cross in order to pay the penalty for our sins. How much more love can one have than that? Here is a story of how one true believer followed in the footsteps of Jesus Christ to reach people with the Gospel.

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*The Moravians were banished from their homeland, Bohemia, and exiled to various countries in 1620. Some came to Germany and found refuge on the estate of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1756). It was here on his estate that they became known as the Moravian Brethren, the forerunners of the Protestant Missionary Movement. In 1730, Count Zinzendorf told the Moravians about the urgent need for missionaries to evangelize the slaves on the Virgin Islands. Leonard Dober listened to Zinzendorf's appeal. As he pondered God's calling, Dober felt excited about this opportunity to serve, but he also envisioned the severe persecution he would endure by selling himself into slavery to evangelize these people. He anticipated the horrible working conditions, but above all the degradation of slavery. No price was too high, he thought, when Jesus Christ endured persecution and died for him. So, Leonard Dober, at the age of eighteen, became the first Moravian missionary to the Virgin Island sugar plantation slaves. However, the source of his persecution did not come from the slave master's whip, but from fellow Christians. Dober found himself ridiculed, mocked, and chastened for his decision to go to the Virgin Islands. The Christians asked him incredulous questions about how he planned to live in the Virgin Islands or how he intended to minister to the slaves. The persecution climaxed when the Christians discovered that Dober planned to sell himself into slavery. As Dober endured this opposition, he thought that if he had proposed to travel as an ambassador of state, he would have been treated differently; but since he was a servant of Jesus Christ commissioned to preach the gospel, he was looked upon as a fool. Dober arrived in the Virgin Islands in the late 1730s, but he did not have to become a plantation slave. Instead he became a servant in the governor's house. Soon he resigned his position, as he was concerned that this position was so superior to that of the slaves that it was detrimental to reaching them for Christ. He chose instead to live in a small mud hut where he could work one-on-one with the slaves. In three years his ministry grew to include 13,000 new converts. Even though Leonard Dober did not have to pay the supreme sacrifice of his life to evangelize the Virgin Island slaves, it is important to note that he was ready to accept persecution and even martyrdom for these people. Through the pioneering efforts of the Moravians, millions have followed in their footsteps, reaching nations around the world with the message of the gospel! (Jonathan Cederberg, "Christian Martyrs: The Hidden Stones in Our Foundation", *The Voice of the Martyrs*, [Evangelical Press Association; August, 1998], p. 11).*

12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

This is an important verse for today. Many false prophets claim to have seen God in order to give them credibility. But the Bible says that no one has seen God at any time. But you might ask, "Didn't Moses see God? Haven't people seen visions of Jesus Christ?" The answer is that no one has ever seen the face of God the Father. Men have seen Jesus Christ in the flesh, and Stephen and Paul saw Him at the right hand of the Father.

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John saw a vision of Jesus where he was so awestruck that he fell down as if he were dead (Rev. 1:17). But no man can see the Father in the flesh and live. To Moses, God said:

Ex. 33:20 "But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

Someday, when we are changed to be like Him, we will see Him face to face.

1 Cor. 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

John's point is that, although we cannot now look on God's face in this life, we have Him living in us. If we love one another, His love abides in us and, not only abides, but is perfected. That means we grow in love each day as we walk in the Spirit.

1 Thess. 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

*2 John 1:6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you **walk in love**.*

Our love is not perfect, but the only way it can grow toward perfection is to love one another in obedience to the commands of God.

13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

The reason we have assurance of salvation and a relationship of sonship with God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son is that He has given us His Spirit. His indwelling Spirit testifies to our relationship to God.

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Heb. 10:15-18 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.

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Don't ever allow false teachers to tell you that you are saved but do not have the Holy Spirit, or claim they can transfer the Holy Spirit to you by some ritual like the laying on of hands. This is devilish false doctrine. Refer them to this verse and the verses above. Tell them that you are saved and have the indwelling Spirit, and that Spirit testifies to the fact that you are a child of God.

14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

This is the Gospel message that we bring. We testify that the Father sent His Son to be Savior. If a person confesses that Jesus Christ is God, then God abides in Him. But remember that people can say this but not really mean it. They will say it, but then say something else like “Jesus is a manifestation of God,” or “Jesus was not fully God at some point,” or that Jesus was not fully man but spirit only, or some other such teaching. This is why you need to be careful that what they claim they believe is in line with what they are actually teaching and doing. If they deny that Jesus Christ—God—came in the flesh in some way, they are not in God. If they add to the definition of who Jesus Christ is by making Him into some kind of pantheistic being (that He is part of the trees, rocks, animals, and everything else in the world) like the WCGIP, then if they state that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, they are misrepresenting Christ. If they say that Jesus Christ was the brother of Lucifer like the Mormons or Kenneth Copeland, they are misrepresenting Christ. If they say that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, but was only a great prophet, like the Muslims or the Bahai, they are not in God. If they say that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, but that you are not indwelt with the Spirit until they transfer the Holy Spirit to you like Benny Hinn and most other false teachers on TV, then they are not in God. If they say that Jesus Christ had to be born again in hell to be the “firstborn” like Benny Hinn and most other Word-Faith teachers—a **serious** misinterpretation of Scripture—that is redefining who God is and they are not in God. Be careful to investigate what people claim to believe beyond their doctrinal statements, which in many cases are actually there to deceive true believers.

16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this

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world.

In verse 16, John repeats again what he has been saying in the preceding verses. We can know we have truly come to believe in Jesus Christ because the Holy Spirit of love abides in us. As we abide in God and His love, He abides in us. If we do not abide in His love, He does not abide in us. How does a person NOT abide in the love of God? By disobedience to His commands—the teachings of the Word of God.

1 John 3:24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

We can have confidence in our salvation on the Day of Judgment because, as children of God, we are His representatives in this world because He abides (lives) in us. This is not saying that we are all God or little gods in this world. That is a false belief that Word of Faith preachers teach using this verse and a few others. That is not what John is saying. He is saying that we are light and salt in the world—that we are representatives of God's love.

Matt. 5:13-16 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Notice that we are not the ones in Heaven. That would be God. We are his earthly representatives. There is only one God.

Deut. 32:39 “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.”

Isa. 44:6 “This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.”

All other “gods” are therefore false gods (idols)—not gods at all (Deut. 32:21; 1 Sam. 12:21; Psa. 96:5; Isa. 37:19; 41:23-24, 29; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19-20).

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Finally we come to the crux of this section. We either have the love of God, which abides in us as we abide in Him, or we have the spirit of fear.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

Before you and I were believers, we lived in fear of judgment. We might not have known it fully, but when we came to understand the Gospel by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, we understood why we lived in fear. God gives every man a conscience and, somehow, if deeply buried, we all sense that we are under judgment and not pleasing God in some way at some time during our lives. This is not to contradict the Bible that states we are completely sinful and without hope. But it is to say that non-believers live in fear, and their consciences somehow tell them that. This is also true for people who call themselves believers but demonstrate that they are still living in fear. I talked about this on my New Apostolic Reformation DVD series where I quoted some of their false prophets as saying that Christians live in fear.

An interesting theme that was repeated in the "National School of the Prophets" videos and in the "Open Memorandum Addressing The Twin Towers War" by C. Peter Wagner is that they claim that God has given the church and Christians a spirit of fear. Chuck Pierce says:

*Now, what the first thing the Lord said this year that He wanted to do so that we could begin to come into an anointing and a mentality for increase He said, **"I'm going to take this year and I'm going to deal with the fears of my people."** ...The Spirit of God said to me **"I'm gonna deal with the spirit of fear in my people because this is a year that I want them to advance into increase.** Now, turn to your neighbor and say, "Get ready to advance into increase." (Audience repeats) ...The spirit of fear is opposite from the gift and the power of love, therefore, **let's while we are here, renounce the power of fear that is operating in us** so we can go forth in love so God's kingdom can advance (Chuck Pierce, National School of the Prophets, Mobilizing the Prophetic Office, Thursday, 5/11/00, 9:30 a.m. - Session 2).*

C. Peter Wagner quotes Barbara Yoder as saying:

*"The purpose of the (Twin Towers) attacks today is **to release massive fear**" ("Open Memorandum Addressing The Twin Towers War" from C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, 9/14/01).*

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Though that was one of the stated goals of the Muslim terrorists, these new “apostles” meant something further. Joseph Askins is quoted as saying that we should pray:

“...that we would not let a spirit of fear come upon us in New York and across the nation” (“Open Memorandum Addressing The Twin Towers War” from C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, 9/14/01).

We should, indeed, pray that our nation not be given over to fear. But then C. Peter Wagner goes on to say:

“Unfortunately, a number of Christian leaders have been opening the doors for a spirit of fear in the body of Christ over the past few years” (“Open Memorandum Addressing The Twin Towers War” from C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, 9/14/01).

Wagner then quotes a prophecy by Rick Joyner that states:

“Several major words are weighing on us. The primary one that I have been hearing is ‘walking in the power of the age to come’” (“Open Memorandum Addressing The Twin Towers War” from C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, 9/14/01).

Wagner concludes the section by saying:

“The church needs to move from fear to power” (“Open Memorandum Addressing The Twin Towers War” from C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, 9/14/01).

Though a spirit of fear may grip the world, true believers will not be affected by it. Our confidence is in the Creator and Sustainer of this universe who carries us and rescued us by sending His only Son to die for us.

Isa. 46:4 “Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. ***I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.***”

The false teaching of Wagner, Pierce, and others in the New Apostolic Reformation is that believers have a spirit of fear. The Bible clearly states that God has NOT given us a spirit of fear, but of Sonship.

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Rom. 8:15 *"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, <"Abba,"> Father."*

So the saying, "No Fear," on bumper stickers and t-shirts most accurately applies to true followers of Christ because we know full well who our Father is, and we trust Him. Those whose trust is misplaced will experience fear. Those who trust in themselves or our government will be afraid. Those who trust in the Lord need not be afraid. We can then say with the Psalmist:

Ps. 56:4 *"In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; **I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?**"*

Isaiah also proclaims:

Isa. 12:2 *"Surely God is my salvation; **I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.**"*

The other troubling aspect of this is the solution that Rick Joyner proposes, and C. Peter Wagner agrees with. It is that we need to walk in the "power of the age to come."

Wagner believes that we are on the "threshold of entering a season in which the power of God in prophecy, healing, miracles, strategic-level spiritual warfare, and prophetic intercession will be widely manifested through common believers on a regular basis" ("Open Memorandum Addressing The Twin Towers War" from C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, 9/14/01).

The problem with this scenario is that the Bible clearly says that the end time will be a time of lying signs and wonders and false prophets.

2 Thess. 2:9 *The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance **with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,***

Mark 13:22 *For false Christs and false prophets will appear **and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible.***

So Wagner is clearly not talking about the millennial age of Christ to come, but some kind of age before that. He forgets that the antichrist comes first. The power of the age we are living in, leading to the antichrist, is the power of the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

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Eph. 2:1-2 *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when **you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.**”*

Those who are disobedient to the commands of the Lord, and thus do not really love the Lord (John 14:24, 15:10), are those who seek after the “power of the age to come” and not the Sonship of the One to come. Those who live for signs and wonders in this age will come to know the fear that the spirit of this present world works in those who are disobedient.

1 Cor. 2:12 *“We have not received the spirit of the world but the **Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.**”*

Those who are true believers know their Father. Those who claim to be true believers but live in disobedience, continuing in the sins of heresy, false prophesy, and the lack of the fruit of the Spirit, do not understand that God has freely given us the spirit of Sonship. Therefore we **need** not fear terrorism, man, war, persecution, or death.

First John Study

Love or Hate? – Part Two (10) 1 John 4:19–5:3

One day C. H. Spurgeon was walking through the English countryside with a friend. As they strolled along, the evangelist noticed a barn with a weather vane on its roof. At the top of the vane were these words: GOD IS LOVE. Spurgeon remarked to his companion that he thought this was a rather inappropriate place for such a message. “Weather vanes are changeable,” he said, “but God’s love is constant.” “I don’t agree with you about those words, Charles,” replied his friend. “You misunderstood the meaning. That sign is indicating a truth: Regardless of which way the wind blows, God is love.” (Source unknown)

I had to make a part two of “Love or Hate?” because John made a part two. The book of First John is sometimes called the “love” letter because John uses that word 24 times in this small letter—more times than any other book of the New Testament, and only second in the Bible to all the Psalms. It is of utmost importance to the believer that we understand the issue of love and practice it. To understand it fully, we first need to know where love comes from.

1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us.

The only reason we know anything about love is because God first loved us. Human natural love always has an element of self-serving gratification in it and, most of the time, any show of empathy or affection comes directly from self-centeredness.

2 Tim. 3:2-5 *People will be **lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.***

How can Paul say that people are lovers of themselves, of money, and of pleasure, and then say they are without love? It is because they are without true godly love in that they do not love God. It is true that people love themselves and love money, which can buy them what they want such as things and power, but they know little or nothing about true love.

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God is love. His love started within Himself as a loving relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (John 17:26). That love was then expressed in His creation. But man sinned against God—they did not accept His love because man and woman disobeyed Him. They rejected His love. It was not long after that first separation that the rejection of the love of God resulted in the first hatred and rejection of a fellow human being—a brother.

20 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Cain was the fourth liar after Satan and the fallen angels. Adam and Eve lied to God. After Cain had murdered Abel, he lied about knowing where he had hidden the body. This hatred of God’s created human beings has continued to this day. Man is fine as long as he is not crossed. But all you have to do to bring out hatred is cause him to be shamed, hurt, put down, stolen from, or lied to. Then the hatred of Cain rises up. It is a genetic thing. It is the sin that we are born into and cannot escape without the Savior.

Those who claim to love God, yet hate their brothers, are liars. Here is how false prophets today try to twist this Scripture. They tell you that if you disagree with them on biblical grounds, you do not love them; therefore, you are a liar. This is not what this passage is talking about. Admonition, rebuke, and finally rejection are a command of God with regards to false teachers. This is talking about hating people because you don’t like how they regard you. Most of the time hatred comes from a lack of being able to listen to and live with what others think and say about you.

No one has seen God. No one will until we live in the New Heaven and New Earth. How can we say we love the unseen God when we can’t even love our brother whom we see? That is absurd. For some people it is easier to simply make God into what they want Him to be so He never does anything to upset the way they want to live—trying to make God into our own image. But that is not love for God. God requires obedience from us as proof of our love. Otherwise, He would have created us without free will. But God did not want robots who did whatever they were programmed to do. He wanted beings that would willingly return His love.

21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

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The commandment of God is that we love our brothers. In that commandment, we fulfill both requirements. We prove we love God by obeying His commands, and we prove we love our brothers by what we do and say.

1 John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

You will love people, and particularly other believers—those born again (whom this verse is addressing)—when you fully realize that every child born of God is your brother. Again, those who are born again believe that Jesus is the Messiah—the Messiah being the only Son of God. If you love the Father, you will also love the child of God. It might be possible to dislike an earthly person and yet like their children. But it is impossible to say you love the Father and hate the child of God in whom the Spirit of God abides.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

This is the bottom line. This is what I tell people who write to me and are defending some false teacher. The Bible is clear that: (1) We are children of God if we love God and obey Him, and (2) we are to mark, avoid, and reject false unrepentant teachers and prophets. I often do not get a reply when I answer them this way. A few listen and take it to heart, namely those who are true believers. Even if they are being deceived, if they love God, they will recognize the truth when they hear it. It makes them think, “Maybe I need to think before I write an angry email about Sandy Simpson exposing, say, Todd Bentley as a false teacher. What if he is a false teacher? I need to do more study on this.” Then they apologize, and it is often those very people who end up telling me they were sorry because they came to realize that there is deadly false teaching out there. Those who love God by keeping His commandments prove that they are children of God. People call themselves children of God all the time, not only in Christianity but also in cults and other religions. But the rubber meets the road when it comes down to obeying God’s Word.

The wonderful thing about obeying God is that it is not like obeying an earthly master. Some earthly masters are cruel and make unreasonable demands on those who serve them. God does not. God never makes a demand that He will not give us the power to deal with.

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Luke 10:19 ***I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.***

Snakes and scorpions are an allusion to demonic powers. Even when the enemy tempts us, God has promised He will not allow the enemy to tempt us beyond what we can bear.

1 Cor. 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; **he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.** But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Have you ever reminded God of this promise? I believe we can petition the Lord when we are in dire temptation to help us by restraining the enemy. The commands of God are not a heavy load to bear. That is because Jesus Christ Himself has said He will bear our burdens.

Matt. 11:28-30 *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,** for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**”*

We can also ease burdens by carrying each other's burdens.

Gal. 6:2 ***Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.***

To obey the Lord is actually far easier than deluding ourselves that the world offers true freedom. The things of this world are actually the opposite of freedom. They put us in a kind of prison from which we cannot escape.

2 Pet. 2:19 ***They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.***

To live in obedience to the law of Christ gives us true freedom.

Gal. 5:1 ***It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.***

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Peter Marshall once prayed this prayer at the opening of the U.S. Senate:

Lord Jesus, thou who art the way, the truth, and the life; hear us as we pray for the truth that shall make all free. Teach us that liberty is not only to be loved but also to be lived. Liberty is too precious a thing to be buried in books. It costs too much to be hoarded. Help us see that our liberty is not the right to do as we please, but the opportunity to please to do what is right. (Peter Marshall, Before the U.S. Senate)

I'm sure most of the politicians did not take this prayer to heart. But we, as believers, should. Our freedom is not to be spent on ourselves, but it should be spent in doing what is right. If we truly are living in obedience to the commands of God, which are not burdensome, we will be spreading God's love around the world by word and by example.

First John Study

Belief or Death?

(11) 1 John 5:4-12

There is an old story about a tightrope walker who did incredible aerial feats. All over Paris, he would do tightrope acts at tremendously scary heights. Then he would go a step further and do it blindfolded, then he would go across the tightrope, blindfolded, pushing a wheelbarrow. An American promoter read about this in the papers and wrote a letter to the tightrope walker, saying, "Tightrope, I don't believe you can do it, but I'm willing to make you an offer. For a very substantial sum of money, besides all your transportation fees, I would like to challenge you to do your act over Niagara Falls."

Now, Tightrope wrote back, "Sir, although I've never been to America and seen the Falls, I'd love to come." Well, after a lot of promotion and setting the whole thing up, many people came to see the event. Tightrope was to start on the Canadian side and come to the American side. Drums rolled and he came across the rope, which is suspended over the treacherous part of the falls—blindfolded! He made it across easily. The crowds went wild, and he came to the promoter and said, "Well, Mr. Promoter, now do you believe I can do it?"

"Well of course I do. I mean, I just saw you do it."

"No," said Tightrope, "do you really believe I can do it?"

"Well of course I do, you just did it."

"No, no, no," said Tightrope, "do you believe I can do it?"

"Yes," said Mr. Promoter, "I believe you can do it."

"Good," said Tightrope, "then you get in the wheelbarrow when I go back across." The word believe, in Greek means "to live by" or to "commit." How often do we say that we believe Christ can forgive our sins and give us the power to live, but refuse to get in the wheelbarrow? (Source unknown)

So it all comes down to belief. Do we believe and live, or become virtual unbelievers destined for death?

1 John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

What a great passage of Scripture! In the letters to the churches in Revelation, Jesus Christ, by way of John, urges the churches and Christians eight times by the Holy Spirit to be overcomers.

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Rev. 2:7 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To him who overcomes**, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*

Rev. 2:11 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes** will not be hurt at all by the second death.*

Rev. 2:17 *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **To him who overcomes**, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.*

Rev. 2:26 ***To him who overcomes** and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—*

Rev. 3:5 ***He who overcomes** will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.*

Rev. 3:12 ***Him who overcomes** I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.*

Rev. 3:21 ***To him who overcomes**, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

Rev. 21:7 ***He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.***

“Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.” In the coming time of darkness, apostasy, and finally tribulation on this earth, we are called to be overcomers. We hope the Lord comes to take His saints out before all this happens, but in any case we must be prepared to overcome. Only those who have been born again can overcome. But we must hold on to our faith in order to be able to overcome the world. The letters to the churches in Revelation are there to prepare us for trials, persecutions, and tribulation from the world. A false world religion and world government will arise that will persecute Christians everywhere.

Rev. 13:7 ***He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.** And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation*

Rev. 14:12 ***This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.***

Don’t be fooled by the false teachers on TV who claim there is a time coming when Christianity will take over the world before Christ’s return. Before the return of Christ to rule and judge the earth, there will be a time

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of apostasy, a time where the saints will be conquered, a time of great tribulation that calls for endurance in the faith. Many will turn from the faith in those days. Islam is likely to play a major role in this, and so we see the beginning of the end now. What we need to be prepared to do is remain faithful to Christ even if we are told to renounce Him or die.

6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

7 For there are three that testify:

8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.

Jesus came by water and by blood. Jesus came by water in adding humanity to His Deity. He came by blood by being born a human baby with human DNA. Jesus did not come by water only but also by blood. But the deeper meaning of this passage is to say that Jesus did not just come baptizing in water for the forgiveness of sins as John the Baptist did. Jesus Christ is greater than John and so baptized us in His blood for the total remission of sins. Just as the Spirit testifies to the water baptism of Jesus Christ by coming in the form of a dove, the coming of the Spirit to indwell the believer testifies that the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for us has saved us.

Actually, there are three that testify—the Spirit, water, and blood. The testimony of at least two witnesses is required to settle a matter in the Bible, and in most laws based on the Bible. But here John points out that we have three witnesses. In the KJV, there is a phrase added to verse seven.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

There is a question whether or not this phrase was in the original letter or was added later, but it is certainly true. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the One God in Three Persons—do testify to the fact that Jesus Christ is the perfect sacrifice for sin. It was the Triune God who decided this was the plan from the before the creation of the world.

Eph. 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love...

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1 Pet. 1:20 ***He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.***

Please notice that He chose us because of His foreknowledge before the creation, but that He was also chosen by the Father before the creation to die for the sins of the world.

God's testimony on this subject is greater than the eyewitness accounts of men. It is a perfect testimony that is born out by the following facts: (1) Jesus was born of water. (2) Jesus was born of human blood. (3) Jesus was baptized in water. (4) Jesus baptizes us with His blood for the remission of sins, and we are to baptize in water as a sign of his blood sacrifice. (5) Jesus is the only salvation for mankind as decreed by God Himself who created mankind.

10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.

11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Not only do we have the testimony of things that have already happened by eyewitnesses, by the acts that took place, and by the Triune God Himself, but we also have a witness in ourselves. When we were born again, a change took place. God created a new self within us by giving us His Holy Spirit to live in us. Those who do not believe God, make Him out to be a liar because they have not believed the testimony of God Himself, and because they do not have the indwelling Spirit to confirm these things. The testimony that God gives is this: That through what His Son did we have eternal life—if we believe and commit to Him. Jesus Christ is the Way, Truth, and Life. He is the only Life. There is no other way to life. Life without Christ is death. Life in Christ is life here and for eternity.

The bottom line is that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and have life, or we do not believe on Him and have death. Belief or death? This is the question that we need to pose to ourselves first, then to others who may yet be saved.

First John Study

In Christ or in the Power of the Evil One?

(12) 1 John 5:13-21

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Finally, in this last section of John's letter, he states that the final purpose for writing this letter is to remind them of who they believe in, and that because of that belief they have eternal life. As we already know, there were many false teachers who were teaching various things, but those things lead to darkness, disobedience, the world, lies, shrinking away, sin, hatred, the antichrist spirit, fear, death, and ending up in the power of the evil one. John wants to remind the true believers they need not listen to false prophets because false prophets do not have God. They do not lead people to the Light, obedience, the Father, the truth, to abide in Christ, to new life, to love, or to belief (and because of that belief to end up in Christ).

14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Because of that relationship we have with Christ in obedience, we have confidence before the throne.

Heb. 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

We can freely approach our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ knowing that what we ask of him, if it is according to His will, will be heard. This verse, along with First John 3:22, gives us the criteria for God to hear us and answer our prayers.

1 John 3:22 ...and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

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We must ask according to His will because we keep His commands and practice things that are pleasing in His sight. This rules out the Word of Faith teachers who say that, once you are a Christian, God has to listen to you and run to fulfill your every desire. That is not what the Bible teaches. In fact, they are teaching people to ask God for things so they can spend it on their fleshly desires.

Jam. 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Of course God hears every prayer because He is omniscient (knows everything). But when it talks about God hearing something, it is talking about God choosing to listen and respond, or to let prayers go unanswered. When we are in line with His Word (obeying His commands) and His will because we are His obedient servants, He says He will hear our prayers and answer. He may answer right away, or answer in His own time. But we are guaranteed an audience with the Father because we belong to Him through the Son. When we know that God hears us because we have met His criteria, we then know that we will receive what we are asking for.

16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.

17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.

First of all, we need to pray for sinners that they will repent. We must ask God to spare them from death and give them life. The life we are talking about here is not only physical life but spiritual life—eternal life.

But what is this sin leading to death that John says we need not bother to pray for? There are a number of interpretations on First John 5:16, and I happen to believe they are all correct in their own way. The first interpretation is that this is talking about people who have heard the truth of the Gospel but have rejected it time and again, instead choosing to practice unrighteousness. John Gill says this:

(It) is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is neither forgiven in this world nor in (the one) to come, and therefore must be unto death; it is a sinning willfully, not in a practical, but doctrinal way, after a man has received the knowledge of the truth; it is a willful denial of the truth of the Gospel, particularly that peace, pardon, righteousness, eternal life, and salvation (which come) by Jesus Christ...and this joined

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with malice and obstinacy (refusal to believe); so that there is no more....sacrifice for such a sin... (John Gill Commentary).

This is supported by Hebrews 10:26.

Heb. 10:26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,

Actually this is exactly what John has been teaching, that if a person continues to practice sin, they are crucifying Jesus Christ over and over again and, thus, they end up having no sacrifice for sin left.

Heb. 6:4-6 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

This truth is what John is saying in many ways, but the writer of Hebrews states clearly that a person can believe, receive the Holy Spirit, but then continue to practice sin and fall away. According to John, if this is the sin unto death that John is speaking of, we should spend our time praying for those who have never heard the Gospel, or who have never believed. Those who believe but end up falling back into apostasy are God's business. They may yet come to the truth, but our time is better spent praying for those who have not crucified Christ over and over again. This is where this interpretation of this passage may not fit as well as the next one I will give you. But I think it is valid in some respects.

The second interpretation of First John 5:16 is like the first, but it refers back to what Jesus told the Pharisees in Matthew 12:30-32.

Matt. 12:30-32 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."

This blasphemy sin—THE blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (as opposed to other blasphemies)—is said to be a rejection of grace by John Gill, Matthew Henry, and others. But Barnes claims it was the denial that Jesus

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Christ was the Son of God when the Pharisees had seen His miracles, yet they called him a devil. Scofield and others agree that this blasphemy is ascribing the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil. This does seem to fit the Matthew 12 passage.

I would say, if this interpretation is accurate, then those who ascribe the work of Satan to be that of the Holy Spirit are on similarly dangerous grounds, such as those in the revival movements claiming the Holy Spirit is manifesting when it cannot be the Holy Spirit by biblical definition. All these are probably part of the picture. I think Gill puts it well (I will put it in simpler English):

The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not talking about ignorant denial of Him, opposition to His deity and personality, resistance of Him in the external ministry of the word, or every sin that is knowingly and willfully committed. It is talking about a despotic usage of the Spirit of grace, an opposing, contradicting, and denying the operations wrought (salvation by grace) or the doctrines revealed by Jesus Christ. This blasphemy goes against a man's own light and conscience, who, out of willful and obstinate malice purposefully attempts to lessen the glory of God, and gratify his own lusts: Such was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees; who, though they knew the miracles of Christ were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet maliciously and obstinately imputed them to the devil, with a view to obscure the glory of Christ, and indulge their own wicked passions and resentments against him; which sin was unpardonable at that present time, and in the Church age to come, when the Spirit of God was poured down in a more plenteous manner.

The third interpretation of First John 5:16 is that it refers to the fate of those who crucified Christ.

1 Cor. 2:7-8 *No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. **None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.***

It is also possible that Hebrews 6:4-6 is referencing the religious leadership in Israel in particular, stating that, *"It is impossible...if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace."*

To be sure, the leadership of Israel at that time did all the above things. They called the Son of God the devil and His works demonic. Then they ultimately took His life. Though this was to fulfill God's ultimate purpose, the payment for their sins is coming and, unless they repented, there is no

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hope for them. It is possible that the churches wanted to pray for the religious leadership of Israel who had crucified Christ, but John was telling them that this was a matter for God. The only problem with this interpretation is that the religious leadership of Israel is really not addressed in First John.

The last interpretation of First John 5:16 may be the best. It is based on what appears to be John's reference to physical death instead of spiritual death when he states that "there is a sin leading to death." If that is the case, then when he talks about God giving the "brothers" life, it would be talking about allowing them to live, since it doesn't really fit for God to be giving spiritual life to "brothers." If we follow this line of thinking, then the sin unto death could be talking about practicing sins that lead to death such as homosexuality/AIDS, drug abuse/overdose, alcoholism/cirrhosis of the liver, etc. I also think of Ananais and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit and were immediately taken out of this life by God. The support for this idea comes from what was happening at Corinth. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for partying while sharing in the Lord's Supper in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:29-31; 2 Cor. 12:21). Paul stated that they were sick and dying because of taking the Lord's blood in vain.

*1 Cor. 11:29-31 For anyone who eats and drinks **without recognizing the body of the Lord** eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, **and a number of you have fallen asleep.** But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.*

Whatever interpretation you choose (and there are different opinions on First John 5:16), since John does not tell us exactly who and what he was referring to, those who claim to be believers who show no respect for Jesus Christ and the precious Holy Spirit may die a physical death in their sins, which would result in their not having eternal life either. We must understand that God is serious about His name, and especially about lying to or blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

The evil one cannot touch those born of God. Have you fully comprehended this statement? If the devil is bothering you, pray to the Lord and remind Him of this promise. If you are born again, the devil cannot touch you! The devil cannot "touch" a child of God. The word "touch" in the Old Testament sometimes meant to kill someone. David used that with reference to not "touching" Saul (1 Sam. 24:12-13). The devil can tempt

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you, but not beyond what you are able to withstand in Christ. He can oppress you, but not to the point where you lose your belief. One thing Satan definitely cannot do is take you out of the hand of God in terms of salvation. Only you can make that choice by walking away from your belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth of spiritual warfare lies in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit who we receive when we are born of God.

19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

The whole world, today, lies in the grip and power of the devil who was thrown down to earth.

Isaiah 14:12 *How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star (Heylael/ shining one), son of the dawn! **You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!***

We do well to remember that our enemy has power. Those who are not born of God are in Satan's power. He is their master.

The wonderful fact is we can know the truth. John uses the word "true" three times for emphasis at the end of his letter. Jesus Christ has come. He will give us understanding. We can ask for wisdom and He will freely give it.

James 1:5 ***If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.***

We can then come to know Him who is true and be in Him who is true. As long as we are in Christ, we are safe. As long as we are in Christ, we can know the truth. God is truth. There is no other truth that matters. There is only one true God, and it is only He—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who can bring us to eternal life.

21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

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This last sentence almost seems to be out of place. John has not talked about idols in this letter. Or has he? Can darkness, disobedience, the world, lying, sin, and hate be our “idols”? If the things of this world are our idols, then we worship them and do not worship God. This reminder at the end of the letter goes back to First John 2:15.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

We are God’s little children—little children who are not mature in Christ and have a tendency to be driven about by the things of this world (Eph 4:14). Those things can become our idols. If we worship those things, then they become idols to us. If that happens, then we may be choked out by the things of this world and lose eternal life.

Luke 8:14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but **as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.**

We must mature and bear fruit as Christians, or God says we will be cut off.

John 15:2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

May we not remain little children but grow to maturity in Christ so that we will gain Christ and bear fruit, instead of gaining the whole world and losing our souls.