

"That You May Know..."

A Study of 1, 2 & 3 John and Jude

By Gary C. Hampton

Lesson 1
Things John's Eyes Saw
1 John 1:1-4

John

John, one of the Lord's apostles, was a son of Zebedee and Salome. He and his brother, James, were fishermen, along with Peter and Andrew. Jesus called them to be a fishers of men. The family did have servants, which may indicate they were more well off than most of their day (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40-41; 1:20; Luke 5:1-11). John, along with Peter and James, were especially close to the Lord. Those three were the only apostles to witness the raising up of Jairus' daughter, the events on the Mount of Transfiguration and Jesus' deep agony in Gethsemane. He and Peter were the first apostles to view the empty tomb (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51; Matthew 17:1-5; 26:36-45; John 20:1-10).

It seems likely that John was the one who leaned on Jesus when the Lord instituted the Lord's supper, as well as being the "disciple whom Jesus loved." That would, of course, also mean that he was the one into whose care Jesus entrusted his mother (John 13:23; 21:20; 19:25-27). Woods says, "From the writings of 'the church Fathers' it appears that John spent much of his later life in Ephesus in Asia Minor...." We do know he was exiled to Patmos, which Woods describes as a lonely island in the Aegean Sea...." This likely occurred when Domitian was raining a terrible persecution on the church. During the time of his exile, John wrote the book of Revelation. Woods also indicates the early church fathers thought "that in the reign of the Emperor Trajan he was allowed to return to Ephesus where he lived to ripe old age, dying when near one hundred years old."

"Concerning the Word of Life"

The first sentence of John's first epistle actually covers the first four verses. There are great similarities between these verses and the first fourteen verses of John's gospel. The expression "that which was" refers to the Word of life and the characteristics exhibited by Him. The word "beginning" has a number of meanings in John and can only be understood by careful examination of the context (1 John 2:7; 3:8; 2:14). The great parallels to John's gospel account make us believe the beginning referred to here is that of creation. The "we" of this verse would seem to be the apostles, who certainly heard and saw Jesus (Acts 4:2; Matthew 13:16-17; Luke 10:23-24).

The A.S.V. has "that which we beheld" instead of "which we have looked upon." Both were trying to make us realize the meaning here involves more intense investigation than mere looking. Certainly their eye-witness account was not made from the viewpoint of a casual observer but of those who actually were able to touch the resurrected Lord (Luke 24:39; John 20:24-29). Jesus' whole purpose in coming to earth was to open up the way of life to man by paying the price of salvation (1 John 1:1; Luke 19:10; John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 5:18-6:1; John

1:4).

The second verse of 1 John 1 is actually a parenthetical statement expanding upon the thoughts of the previous verse. From all eternity, the Life had dwelt with the Father (John 1:1-3). Then, that Life was made known, or revealed, in the flesh (John 1:14; Philippians 2:4-7). John and the other apostles had seen Jesus and could testify as eyewitnesses (John 14:8-11). To truly understand Jesus the Life, He must be seen as eternal in nature, having been with God in creation, then having taken the form of man and now seated on the throne ruling with the Father (Acts 2:25-36).

Developing a Fellowship With John, the Father and His Son

After the parenthetical thoughts of verse 2, John resumed the thoughts of verse 1 by emphasizing again his position as an eyewitness. It appears this epistle was written, in part, to answer those who did not believe God could take a fleshly form because, they thought, flesh was sinful. John responded with great emphasis on the firsthand nature of his account. The word "fellowship" comes from the Greek word *Koinonia* which Thayer says means "fellowship, association, community, communion, joint-participation."

John said his purpose in writing was to enhance development of such joint-participation between himself and the Christians addressed. Actually, such began when one became a Christian which made him a partner with the Father and His Son (compare 1 Corinthians 1:9; John 13:8; 14:23; 17:21-23). It continued as each experienced the blessings of his Father-son relationship with God and was manifested in reverent, yet joyful, worship at His feet. If they grew in their fellowship with the Father, Son and their fellow Christians, then their joy would be filled to the brim and so would John's (1 John 1:4; 3 John 3-4)

Discussion Questions

1. Give a brief description of the author of this work.
2. In your own words, tell about the close relationship between Jesus and the apostles.
3. Explain how the "Life" which was with the Father came to be manifested to the apostles.
4. What benefits can you see coming out of being in "fellowship" with the Father and His Son?
5. After scanning the rest of John's letter, list some of the things you think might make your joy be full.

Lesson 2

The Light of God's Love

1 John 1:5-2:2

God Is Light

The Gnostics John was likely dealing with claimed to be specially enlightened. The word *gnosko* means "I know." John proclaimed God as light and even said there was no darkness in Him. Of course, in the Bible light is used to represent righteousness, holiness and salvation (Psalm 36:9; 119:105, 130; 27:1; Isaiah 49:6; John 1:9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35-36, 46). In contrast to that, Satan is pictured as the prince of darkness, which stands for all that is evil (Ephesians 2:2-3; 5:8-14; 6:22; Isaiah 5:20; Colossians 1:13). Our English statement "no darkness at all" comes from a double negative in the Greek which stresses emphatically God's lack of any darkness, or evil (1 John 1:5; James 1:17).

The knowledge the Gnostics believed they possessed was a mystical one imparted to them specially. There were ascetic gnostics who tried to totally separate themselves from the world. The libertine gnostic believed he could participate in all kinds of evil without harming his pure knowledge. Thus, John took up a discussion of some who claimed to be in partnership with God, yet walked in darkness. The word "walk" describes the whole of human life or conduct. John says it is impossible to be in fellowship with God and live in sin. Christianity is not a mere mental exercise, but a belief practiced in one's life (1 John 1:6; James 1:21-22).

Walking in the Light

The Christian's walk should be in the light. Woods says, "The verb 'walk' here (*ean peripatomen*) is present active subjunctive, thus literally, 'If we keep on walking in the light....'" The daily lives of God's children must be so conducted as to remain in the light of God's direction. Naturally, such living places them in partnership with God, Christ and all others who walk in the light of God's will. Thus, fellowship with Christian brethren is dependant upon fellowship with the Father and Son (1 John 1:7).

Just as physical life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11, 14), eternal life is in the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 9:22; Matthew 26:27-28; John 19:33-34; Romans 6:3-4). Christians are set free from sin and placed on the pathway of light by the blood of Jesus. So long as they continue on that path their sins, which are more evident in the light, are cleansed. The word "cleanses" is in the present tense just as walk is. So, those continually walking in the light rejoice in a continual cleansing from sin's defilement.

The Christian and Sin

Some evidently claimed to be above sin. They may have said, "We are spiritual and cannot sin." Today, some teach the doctrine of salvation by faith only, which likewise implies

one's conduct does not matter. They effectively say faith sets them above sin. One who believes he does no sin is self deceived, according to John, and without truth in him (1 John 1:8; compare John 8:44).

However, those who willingly confess their sins can find forgiveness. Thayer says the word "confess" means, "to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent...to admit or declare oneself guilty of what one is accused of." It is as if God listed the various wrongs one has committed and he admits his guilt. The confession here is to God just as the forgiveness is from God. Again, the word "confess" is in the present tense which would suggest the necessity of continuing to confess individual sins to keep on being cleansed. God has promised to forgive confessed sins and will be faithful in keeping that promise (Psalm 143:1). He is justified, or righteous, in forgiving sins because Jesus' blood paid the price. When God forgives, all guilt is removed.

Verses 6, 8 and 10 of 1 John 1 begin with "if we say." The apostle appears to have been identifying himself with those who held to false doctrine to soften the blow of saying they were in error. In verse 8, it appears sin is considered abstractly, while in verse 10 John is speaking of specific sin as brought up in verse 9. When one says he is guilty of no specific sin, he makes God a liar. In Jesus' death on the cross, God acknowledged man's sin and sought to give him a means of pardon. God's word is the whole of the gospel (John 5:36-38; 8:37; 12:44-50).

Jesus, the Lawyer For the Christian's Defense

Having now proven sin to be a part of everyone's life, John hastened to show that it should not be counted as normal and therefore a thing in which one should indulge. John wrote as an aged man in the faith to those much younger. He used endearing words that a mother might use as she held and caressed one of her own children.

The Christian's goal should ever be sinlessness, that is, not even committing one act of sin. When a Christian does sin, he keeps on having (present tense) an advocate, which Thayer defines as "one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor." The Holy Spirit is described by Jesus as "another advocate" (John 14:16; see also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Satan is the Christian's accuser and Jesus is the defense attorney (Revelation 12:10). The case is pled before God's divine bar of justice. Jesus is "with", or by the side of, the Father, thus ever ready to defend His saints (compare Luke 12:8; Acts 7:56).

Woods notes, "There is no article before the word 'righteousness' in the Greek text. The meaning is, Jesus, a Righteous One, pleads the cause of unrighteous ones. Only the pleading of such an Advocate could possibly avail." What good would come from one unrighteous one appealing to God in behalf of another?

Christ is the propitiation, or as Thayer says, "the means of appeasing", for the sins of individual Christians. God's wrath is directed at sin. Christ came to provide the means of the removal of that wrath. John says for "our sin", which includes him in the group needing that

great sacrifice. Jesus' gift is available to the whole world if they will but accept it in believing faith (1 John 2:2; John 3:16-17; Romans 3:24-26).

Discussion Questions

1. How does John use the images of light and darkness?
2. Explain the meaning of the word "walk" and tell where a Christian should do such.
3. Relate the importance of blood in the Christian life. How does John say Christians maintain contact with the blood?
4. What is the Christian's relationship to sin? How is that different from those still in the world?
5. Explain why we need a lawyer. How does Jesus satisfy that role and what evidence will He use to get a "not guilty" verdict?

Do You Know God?

1 John 2:3-11

Feelings Are Not a Valid Test

There are those who answer the question, "Do you know God?", by saying, "Yes, I can feel His presence in my heart." While it may help one to feel he has God's presence with him, it is important to realize feelings are not a good test for religious security. John says a better test is that of obedience (1 John 2:3; Titus 1:16; Matthew 7:21; John 14:15). Woods notes the word "keep" is present subjunctive indicating continuous keeping. The word "know" in scripture often indicates intimate knowledge as it does here (Genesis 4:1, 25). Thus, the close partnership of 1 John 1 is dependent upon one's yielding to God's will as set forth in His commandments.

Of course, words must be matched by actions, as 1 John 2:4 clearly shows. The Gnostics believed they had a superior knowledge of God and yet did not display it in godly living. The continual lack of obedience, which is indicated by the present tense in the Greek, makes one a continual liar, and lying becomes a part of his very character.

By daily obedience, one continues to grow up in Christ until his love for God is complete, or full-grown. One who claims to abide in Christ can easily verify it by the way he lives his daily life. Woods writes, "'Ought', from *opheilo*, to be in debt, denotes the moral obligation here to exhibit the basis of one's profession." Peter calls Christ our example in 1 Peter 2:21 and admonishes us to follow His steps (1 John 2:5-6).

The old commandment was what John's readers had heard from the beginning of their Christian lives, or the gospel. It is an old commandment in that its basic parts had been repeated through the centuries (Leviticus 19:18). Yet, it is new in the depth to which the Lord took it when He said, "as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34-35). Never before had love like Christ's been displayed to man (Romans 5:6-8; John 15:13). Also, the command is ever new in that Christians constantly find new ways and opportunities to fulfill it. The light of the gospel dispels the darkness of ignorance and superstition (1 John 2:7-8; compare John 3:19-21; 8:12; Ephesians 4:17-18; Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:5).

Those In the Light Love the Brethren

The claim to be in the light, therefore in fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7), is easily tested by our attitude toward our brethren. God displayed such love for the lost world that He gave His Son that those who believed Him might have everlasting life (John 3:16). The church was purchased by Christ's life and blood (Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28). One cannot claim to be in partnership with God and hate the ones for whom God gave so much (1 John 2:9).

The love we are to have for our brethren is agape love, or the commitment to act for the good of others. One who loves his brother will be careful not to put a pit or snare in his way

(Matthew 18:6-7; Romans 14:15-21; 1 Corinthians 8:4-13). However, John may here be talking about our putting a snare in our own way. Notice the next verse and consider the possibility that John is saying the lack of proper concern for one's brethren places him in darkness and makes him subject to fall into pits and snares because he cannot see (1 John 2:10).

Those who hate their brethren are inwardly darkened, walk in darkness and do not know where they are going. Sadly, they are blinded to their own condition (1 John 2:11; Psalm 82:5; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Discussion Questions

1. What is involved in "knowing God"?
2. How can one continue to grow until he becomes a full-grown Christian?
3. Explain why the same command appears to be described as both old and new.
4. What is the test used to determine if one is in the light?
5. What type of love should one in the light have for his brother? Describe some of the things this would cause one to do.

Lesson 4

The Spiritual Man

1 John 2:12-17

John's Purpose In Writing

John states his purpose for writing the book of 1 John in 2:12-14. First, he told his purpose from his own perspective as author. He was writing to young children, or *tecknia* in the Greek, in the faith because their sins had recently been forgiven through their obedience and because of the authority of Christ (Acts 2:38; 4:12; 22:16). He was also writing to those mature enough in the faith to be teaching and leading others to greater maturity (Hebrews 5:12-14). They had come to have an intimate understanding of the eternal Christ (1:1). He was also writing to those just reaching the age of maturity. They had grown wiser in the faith because they had successfully met and overcome some of the challenges of the devil (Ephesians 6:11-12; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

Then, he follows with a second group of sentences which describe the reader's viewpoint of John's purpose in writing. He had written to babes (*Paddy*) in Christ (2 Peter 2:2) because they had come to know God as their Father (Romans 8:13-16; Ephesians 1:3-6). He had written to the most mature Christians who through study had come to fully appreciate their Lord and better understand His eternal nature. He had written to those just maturing in Christian service because they were realizing their strength and best defense against Satan was God's word and had used it to overcome him (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 6:10; Hebrews 4:12).

"Do Not Love the World"

The "world," which John instructed Christians not to love, is defined by Turner as "the sphere of rebellion, including sensuous desires and interests, false pride and vanity, unholy ambitions, avarice, selfishness and the like" (Ephesians 2:1-3; Philippians 3:18-19). One cannot love worldly things and God at the same time (Matthew 6:24; Romans 8:5; James 4:4). Thayer says the word "love" here is "to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it". John tells Christians not to love worldly things in general or any one of them in particular (1 John 2:15). A case in point would be the rich young ruler of Matthew 19:16-22.

Worldliness did not originate in the Father but in the world out of which believers come. The lust of the flesh would involve any uncontrolled appetite of the body. Eating, for example, is not wrong unless we allow it to lead to gluttony. The lust of the eyes would be anything excited by sight. The pride, or vain glory, of life is the seeking of worldly rewards and praise of men above that of God. All of these were used by Satan in the Garden of Eden and the temptations of the Lord (1 John 2:16; Genesis 3; Matthew 4:1-3).

The things of this life are, at best, temporary (2 Corinthians 4:18). Woods says the verb tense indicates the world is already in the process of passing away. In contrast to the world, the one who does God's will lasts or endures throughout eternity (1 John 2:17; Romans 6:23). The disciple's prayer should be that God will help him have that lasting quality through the blood of

his precious Son!

Discussion Questions

1. What was John's purpose in writing this letter?
2. Think about some who you would consider young in the faith. What lessons, especially from this book, could you help them learn?
3. What helps one grow wiser in the faith?
4. What is the world John urged his readers not to love? What is the love of which he spoke?
5. Name the three specific lusts John wrote about. Briefly explain what each entails.

Lesson 5

A Warning Against False Teachers

1 John 2:18-23

A Troubling Hour

John told his readers he was writing during a last hour, the definite article not appearing in the original (1 John 2:18). The word hour, or Greek *horae*, refers to a fixed period of time (John 5:35 "for a season"; 16:2,4; 2 Corinthians 7:8; Philemon 15). Jesus spoke of those who would deceive many by saying they were Christ, as well as false prophets who would deceive many (Matthew 24:5, 11). Our Lord gave both of these as signs which would appear before the end of the Jewish order at the destruction of Jerusalem.

If the book of 1 John was written prior to the destruction, John may have been referring to it. If after, Thomas suggests, John refers to the season of anti-Christ, who are spoken of later in the book. Other New Testament verses predicted the coming of an anti-Christ or lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8; Revelation 13:11). John wrote of many who exhibited the spirit that would characterize him. This may well refer to those who denied Christ came in the flesh.

Robert Shank well notes concerning 1 John 2:19 that John is specifically writing of the anti-Christ, and not making a general statement about all who have believed or ever will believe. At the time of their withdrawal, they were not of the same obedient spirit as John and the brethren to whom he wrote. It helped the church when they went out because it was easier to see them as false teachers. Those represented as stony ground believers, as well as Hymenaeus and Alexander, would be examples of those who were once in the fold but went out. To be able to go out, one must first be in, which strongly suggests a change (Matthew 13:20-21; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

Christians Are Anointed

Those who were to be kings were anointed, thus showing God had elevated them to a higher position (1 Samuel 10:10). The Christians to whom John wrote had been similarly elevated by Jesus Christ. The symbol of the sonship relationship to the Father is the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13-16; Acts 2:38). All who obey the truth are promised this gift and none can claim to have a greater position in this plan of salvation (1 John 2:20).

John wrote to those who knew the truth, which under the new law of Christ would include all who are in the kingdom (Jeremiah 31:31-34). They would recognize anything that was not of the gospel and should know it was a lie. The particular lie John dealt with here was a denial of Jesus as the Christ. Those who would question the truth of God coming in the flesh actually deny Jesus as the Christ, God's Son. In so doing, they deny the Father who testified to his Sonship and was one with Him in purpose (Matthew 17:5; John 5:23; 14:8-11). The anti-Christ, of whom John wrote taught this lie (1 John 2:21-22).

Anyone who refuses to confess Christ as God's Son has burned his bridge to the Father.

By denying God's Son, he has destroyed his relationship with both the Son and his Father (1 John 2:23; John 14:6; Matthew 10:32-33).

Discussion Questions

1. Read some of the verses which refer to the anti-Christ. Explain what you think such a one would do or teach.
2. Some people believe that once an individual is saved, he cannot so sin as to be lost. Compare that with John's statements about those who "went out".
3. How was anointing used in the Old Testament? In what sense could a Christian be described as anointed?
4. Who did John say knew the truth? What lie should they have readily recognized?
5. What does the denial of Jesus as God's Son do to one's relationship to God the Father?

Lesson 6

Knowing We Are God's Children

1 John 2:24-29

Possessing Eternal Life

The beginning of the Christian life comes because of the hearing of the gospel. We must give a permanent home to the first principles and build on them if we want to abide in the Son and the Father (Hebrews 5:12-6:3; John 1:11-13; Galatians 3:26-27). Notice the word "if" which clearly suggests a condition of maintaining a good relationship with the Father and the Son and one's salvation (1 John 2:24). Other passages teach us there is no guarantee of eternal life without our meeting God's conditions. (John 15:1-10; 2 Peter 1:3-11).

We possess eternal life in prospect through God's promise (Mark 10:29-30; Titus 1:2; Romans 8:24-25). It is ours if we hold fast the gospel we heard from the beginning. Joseph understood that God's promise would be accomplished and based his instructions concerning his body upon that confidence (Genesis 50:24-26). Similarly, we can fully trust God's promise and should order our lives on that basis. John wrote his book to warn against those false teachers who would lead Christians out of Christ and cost them the wonderful promise of life eternal (1 John 2:25-26).

Abiding In Christ

When one obeys the gospel, he is anointed and sealed with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:15-22). John reassured his readers by telling them that sealing was something truly promised to those who obey God and does not change from day to day or time to time. As long as we seek to do the Father's will, the message of the Holy Spirit remains sure within us and helps us discern between truth and false teaching (John 7:17).

The word of God is the word of the Holy Spirit who was to guide the apostles into all truth (Ephesians 6:17; John 14:16; 16:13). If one possesses the word of the Spirit, he possesses the truth. The ones to whom John wrote had received the gospel and did not need some man to teach them where they were in error (1 Corinthians 2:11-16). Jesus had come in the flesh, as John taught (1:1-3), and they had no need of other teaching in that regard. All the things the false teachers presented had already been answered by the things John's readers had received. The gospel is true, not a lie, and should remain in us so we can remain in Christ (1 John 2:27).

So, John pleaded with his children in the faith to remain in Christ and His fellowship so their sins could continue to be removed and they would be prepared for His coming (1:7). If Christ should appear in the season spoken of in verse 18, they could be bold because the Savior's blood was on their side (1 John 2:28; Hebrews 10:19).

When John wrote, "If you know that He is righteous," Woods says the Greek word translated "know" (*eidate*) comes from a root word suggesting theoretical knowledge. In contrast, when John says, "you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him," the word is *ginoskete*, which comes from a root suggesting practical knowledge. If one recognized theoretically that God is righteous, his practical knowledge would tell him all who

practice right living in accord with God's will are born of God (compare John 3:5; Titus 3:5). In other words, those who partake of God's nature are obviously his children (1 John 2:29).

Discussion Questions

1. Is possession of eternal life contingent upon anything? If so, what?
2. In what sense could a Christian be said to possess eternal life?
3. What seal, or guarantee, do Christians have that they are in fellowship with God and Christ?
4. What can a Christian use to separate between truth and error?
5. What did John want the Christians to continue in so they would be prepared for Christ's coming?
6. What sure means did John give for recognizing those who are God's children?

Lesson 7

God's Children and Sin

1 John 3:1-9

God's Love Is Out of This World!

John wanted Christians to stop and closely look to see what type, or sort, of love God had shown them. According to Thayer, some grammarians say the meaning is "from what country, race, or tribe?". In other words, God's love is obviously not of this world. Instead, it is the love of One from a heavenly country. The Father gave us that love by the death of His Son and through the new birth made us His natural offspring. Those of the world would not acknowledge Jesus as God's Son and will not acknowledge us as God's sons (1 John 3:1; John 15:18-19; 16:1-3).

Even though the world does not recognize it, Christians are children of God while on this earth, as God Himself will attest. While still living in the flesh, they do not know what they will look like during eternity (2 Corinthians 15:35-50). However, they can be assured when Jesus returns to this earth, they will be like Him (1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:20-21). The Christians' hope is of being like Christ when He appears and John assures all such will be like him. Because of this hope, Christians keep on purifying themselves to be as much like Him as they can be when He comes. This sounds very much like the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. Adequate preparations must be made to be in a constant state of readiness when the Lord comes (1 John 3:2-3).

The Relationship of the Child of God to Sin

Those who are constantly involved in sin, so that it is a way of life, "commit lawlessness." Those involved in lawlessness, which Thayer says is "the condition of one without law, - either because ignorant of it, or because violating it", or "contempt and violation of law, iniquity, wickedness," and are sinners. Thus, one is a sinner when he disregards God's law out of ignorance or knowingly (1 John 3:4).

Jesus came to earth and took the form of man to rid man of the blight of sin (Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10). While on earth, the Savior did not sin (1 Peter 2:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 9:14). There was no sin in Him, thus those in Him should not be involved in the regular practice of sin (1 John 3:5). Actually, there is no sin counted against the credit of those in Christ, as we observed in 1:7.

John's mention of those abiding in Christ is reminiscent of the Lord's great parable of the vine and branches in John 15:1-10. One must abide in Christ to abide in His love, but such cannot be done by one who is continually sinning. Those who are abiding in Christ are not in the sinning business. Woods tells us, "The present tense, in Greek, indicates action in progress at the present time. It is thus distinguished from the aorist tense which is a single act indefinitely conceived of, without regard to time." Basically, the aorist indicates one time action while the present indicates continuing action. In this verse, the abiding and sinning are in the present tense. John knew Christians would commit individual acts of sin (1:8), but was saying here that it would not be his habit. At the point in the past when the Christian started to habitually sin, he ceased to have inner perception (see) of God and the intimate spiritual relationship (know) was broken off (1 John 3:6).

Christians Are Out of the Sinning Business

Evidently, false teachers were asserting one could live a life of sin and still be acceptable to God. John did not want Christians to be led astray, but assured them that people who were saved, thus righteous, would live a righteous life, just as their Lord is righteous. The righteous are children of God and the wicked are children of the devil (1 John 3:7-8; compare John 8:44; Acts 13:10). Again, the reference is to those who live in sin, or constantly practice it. The devil was both the first sinner and the first to lead man into sin. Jesus was made known on earth to remove the stain of sin and the penalty of death it brought (Hebrews 2:14-15).

God's children do not go on sinning as a regular practice. Yet, they do commit individual acts of sin (1:8, 10). In explaining the parable of the sower, Jesus said the seed is God's word (Luke 8:11). That word is given a home in the heart of the Christian (Colossians 3:16). Woods points out that the word for sin, when John says "he cannot sin", is *harmartarein*, "the force of which is, 'he cannot continue to live a life of sin' (as before)." It is God's word in the Christian's heart that warns him and directs him away from the regular practice of sin (Psalm 119:9-16; Matthew 4:1-10, esp. 4, 7, and 10). In his obedience to the word of God, the Christian died to sin (1 John 3:9; Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 3:1-10).

Discussion Questions

1. What evidence would you offer someone that God's love is not of this world?

Whose Child Are You?

We reveal who we are by how we live. The children of the devil habitually sin, while the children of God constantly strive to do God's will. Particularly, God's children will love each other, and when they fail to do so they will be excluded from the family of God. Children of the Father will show the love He has for the brethren. The early church had a great love that was shown in their actions (Acts 2:45; 4:32, 34-37; Hebrews 13:1-3). The importance of brotherly love was stressed by Jesus and is a foundation principle taught from the very first day of the church's existence (1 John 3:10-11; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10).

Cain is an example of one who was spiritually a child of the devil because he killed his brother (Genesis 4:1-16). Since Abel's offering was by faith and faith comes by hearing God's word (Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17), we deduce that Cain was willfully disobedient (Genesis 4:5-7), which showed his spiritual parentage. The word "murdered" is literally our word butcher, as in cutting the throat, and may indicate how Cain killed Abel. He killed his brother because Abel's works were good and his evil, thus, he was envious (1 John 3:12).

The Danger of Hatred

So, it should come as no surprise when the world hates us when we do things pleasing to God (John 15:18-20). Good works expose evil works and their reward stirs envy in the hearts of evil workers. We should not encourage the hatred of the world but live lives of example that may win them to the Lord's way (1 John 3:13; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:16-17).

God's children have migrated from spiritual death to life (Ephesians 2:1; John 5:24-25; Colossians 2:13). We can have certain knowledge that we have so migrated if we love the brethren. A failure to love the brethren is a clear sign we are still spiritually dead (1 John 3:14).

The end result of hatred is murder (Matthew 5:21-22). Murder will certainly lead to the exclusion from eternal life with the Father, so we must avoid its beginnings. Jesus taught His followers to love instead of hate when He laid down His life for those who were enemies of His Father, or sinners (John 15:13; Romans 5:6-8). Jesus voluntarily died that we might have life (John 10:11, 17-18; 2 Corinthians 5:21). His great sacrifice compels Christians to have the same attitude of sacrificial love toward their brethren (1 John 3:15-16; 1 Corinthians 8:8-13; Galatians 6:1-2, 10).

The Importance of Loving the Brethren

It may be easy for one to say he would die for the brethren when such has never been required of him. However, the true test of one's willingness to lovingly sacrifice comes when he possess the things necessary to sustain life and sees a brother in need. To refuse to sacrifice for him in such a little way is to show one does not have a love like God had. It is not wrong to use loving words, but it is wrong to substitute them for loving actions (1 John 3:17-18; James 2:15-16)

Those who are of the truth will obey Jesus' words (John 18:37). One of His commands was that Christians love one another and, as already noted, the keeping of such verifies one is of God. Doubts may arise, but comfort and reassurance can belong to the one who exhibits the love of God in his life. One's conscience may not let him rest though he has such assurance, but God is greater than man's conscience and will truly blot out forgiven sins and remember them no more (1 John 3:19-20; Hebrews 10:16-17)

The Christian's conscience should only be hushed by God's forgiveness. When one has forgiveness through the blood of Christ, he can boldly enter heaven because of its cleansing power (Hebrews 10:18-20). Specifically, he can boldly approach God in prayer and know He will attend to his needs (Hebrews 4:16; John 16:23-24). Of course, John is not talking about self-centered, but obedient prayers (James 4:2-3). God is ever listening for the prayers of the righteous to attend to their needs (1 John 3:21-22; 1 Peter 3:10-12). If John had not told his readers something different, they might have said there are two commands in verse 23. Each must believe in Jesus, both his humanity and divinity, as well as obeying Him by loving the brethren. Loving obedience is clearly connected with faith in one great necessary commandment.

Discussion Questions

1. If one is a child of God, what one characteristic will he be sure to have?

2. How did Cain show he was a child of the devil?

3. What in the life of a Christian produces hate in those of the world?

4. What is the end result of hatred? How did Jesus demonstrate that His followers ought to avoid all things of that nature?

5. What regular occurrence gives Christians the opportunity to demonstrate their love for their brethren?

6. Is conscience always a good guide in religion? How did God plan for Christians to have their consciences truly freed from guilt?

Lesson 9

Recognizing the Spirit of Truth

1 John 3:24-4:6

Christians Have Christ Abiding In Them

When one, through obedient faith, keeps the commandments of the Lord, he becomes a part of Christ, or is placed in the Lord's body (Galatians 3:26-27). Also, John says Christ will dwell in Him (John 14:23; 15:1-10). The Holy Spirit is given to Christians as the assurance that they are in Christ (Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13). It is not clear how the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian any more than one can know how his own spirit dwells in his body. Of course, Christians do know Christ is theirs because of the obedient faith already discussed (1 John 3:24).

Testing the Spirits

Every person claiming to teach God's law is not from God (Matthew 7:15-20). Moses told the children of Israel they could test a prophet by whether or not his words came to pass (Deuteronomy 18:22). If the prophet's words came to pass and he tried to get the people to follow other gods, one could also know he was not from God (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). Coffman notes the literal meaning in 1 John 4:1 is "stop believing every spirit", which may indicate they were very gullible. As the latter part of this verse shows, the spirits John is speaking of are false prophets. Woods says the word "test" means "run an assay on them as a metallurgist does his metals and determine whether they were of God." Our testing today must be done by aligning their teachings with the word of God (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Galatians 1:6-9; Jude 3; Acts 17:10-12).

Central to Christianity is the doctrine that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 20:30-31; Matthew 16:13-20; 1 Corinthians 12:3). Any man affirming such clearly identified himself as God's prophet. To deny Jesus was God's Son come in the flesh was to identify oneself as one who partook of the spirit of the anti-Christ (1 John 4:2-3).

Distinguishing Between the Spirits of Truth and Error

The Christians' victory over such false teachers is assured because they are on God's side (Romans 8:31). The false teachers had abiding in them the spirit of the devil who is the prince of this world (Ephesians 2:1-2; 6:10-13). They followed worldly ways and said things pleasing to worldly minded people. Thus, they met with success and approval from the worldly. This helps us understand why false teachers meet with great success. They are saying what the world wants to hear (1 John 4:4-5).

John said he, the other apostles, and all those who teach the truth like them are of God. All those who are in intimate relationship with God through the obedience of righteousness will recognize their teachings and follow them, but those who are not will fail to follow (John 8:47). This is yet another test of the true Spirit in the teachers of truth versus the false spirit that was in the heart of the false teachers (1 John 4:6).

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the Christian's relationship to Christ as John reveals it in this passage.
2. How can we know if someone is speaking Christ's truth as revealed through the Holy Spirit?
3. What one central fact will one affirm who is really a Christian? In what ways could one do this?
4. Give some reasons you see that cause false teachers to meet with great success.
5. What other means does John give for recognizing those who are in an intimate relationship with God?

Lesson 10

Love, a Sign One Knows God

1 John 4:7-19

God's Children Are Known By Their Love

God's children can be identified by their love for others, which was first demonstrated by the Father. God was willing to give up His Son for the good of those loved, and Christians must be willing to give up self for the sake of others. Some may have yielded to Christ but still hated former enemies who were now their brethren. Such stands as proof that individual is not a child of God. One cannot truly claim to be a Christian, or child of God, if he does not love. Love is one of God's characteristics, just as surely as it could be said He is light and spirit (1 John 4:7-8; 1:5; John 4:24).

God's love for lost mankind was shown in the sending of His only one of a kind Son, or only begotten (Hebrews 11:17). God does have other sons (Romans 8:14-17) but Christ partakes of the nature of God in a way none other does (John 1:1-5, 14; Philippians 2:5-11). He came to earth for the specific purpose of dying for the sins of lost humanity, that they might have the opportunity to live (John 3:16-17; Romans 5:6-10). God showed the meaning of true love when He loved sinful man, who seemed unlovable (Titus 3:3-5). The love of His followers for God did not come first but is an outpouring of thanks to the Almighty for the great sacrificial gift he gave for sin on Calvary (1 John 4:9-10; 2 Corinthians 9:15).

God's great love for all those in Christ compels them to love one another (1 Peter 1:18-19). The word translated "if" in 1 John 4:11 would be better translated "since", as it is a clear conclusion based upon what John has already written. The love John calls upon Christians to have for the brethren is continuous, or ongoing.

Love, A Means of Seeing God

No man has ever seen God in the fullness of His nature (John 1:18). However, Jesus came to declare the nature of God to man. While man has not seen God in all His glory, when believers love one another, He indwells them and His love is brought to maturity in them. As one evidence of God's indwelling the faithful and their abiding in Him, John gives the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Woods notes the first fruit of the Spirit is love, which is interesting in light of John's present discussion (1 John 4:12-13; Galatians 5:22-23).

While no man has seen the Father, John and the other apostles had seen God in the flesh. Further, they were witnesses of God's having sent His Son in the flesh to take away the sins of the world (John 3:16; 1:29; Luke 19:10). The apostle of love further informed his readers that anyone who confesses Jesus as God's Son has God abiding in him. The confession here must at least be somewhat synonymous with keeping Jesus' commandments since both are said to cause the Father to abide in Christians. This confession is more than mere acknowledgment of Christ's Sonship (Matthew 7:21-23; Mark 1:23-24; James 2:19). It is the full belief in His Sonship that motivates one to do His will knowing he is truly Lord of all (1 John 4:14-15).

The apostles knew Jesus, who declared the authority of the Father. He declared that authority because of the love the Father had for Him from eternity. Once they yielded to that

known Lord and the authority of His Father, His love extended to them also (John 17:24-26). These thoughts which are essentially illustrated in Jesus' prayer for unity, should help disciples to see how they can know and believe the love God had for them in sending His Son. That love, which comes through knowing God's Son, is the Christian's abode and because we abide in it God abides in us, since God is love (1 John 4:16).

Mature Love Gives One Boldness in Judgment

When the love of God becomes mature in His children, like the ripening of fruit, they can face the judgment with boldness. Such boldness arises from the fact that Christians are of Christ in that they have taken on His great nature of love. When John says there is no fear in love, he speaks of the trembling fear of one who has done wrong and awaits punishment. When one abides in love, or in Christ, such fear of judgment is banished from his heart. When one is not seeking to fully keep the commandments of Christ, he can know love is not fully grown, or ripened, in him, which will result in the fearful wait for punishment common to the disobedient (1 John 4:17-18).

In 1 John 4:19, the American Standard Version has the better rendering, "We love, because he first loved us." The Christian's love for God, neighbor, enemy and brother, is a direct response to the love God first had for His children. Some have tried to make God an angry creator whom Jesus appeased by dying on the cross. This verse, along with John 3:16, and Romans 5:8, proves God loved lost mankind first and sent Jesus to die to satisfy the requirements of justice.

Discussion Questions

1. Christians, as children of God, will exhibit what characteristic? How did God show that trait?

2. What did Jesus come to earth to reveal to man? How can believers show God is indwelling them?

3. Explain how one can fully confess Jesus as God's Son.

4. In what sense could Christians be said to abide in God's love?

5. How can a person face judgment with boldness?

6. What is the Christian's direct response to the love of God?

Lesson 11

Characteristics of the Child of God

1 John 4:20-5:5

Loving the Brethren

Generally speaking, it is easier to love that which is near and seen than that which is far away and unseen. Earlier, John had said, "No one has seen God at any time (verse 12). It is important to remember that man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Christians should love that spiritual image in every man. To fail to do so is to fail to love God. Such love should especially be shown for brethren in the family of God, or the church. The love commanded by John is not affection but a looking out for the best interests of the object loved. In fact, that is the same love God's children are commanded to have for their enemies, their neighbors and their brethren (1 John 4:20-21; Matthew 5:44-48; 22:35-40; John 13:34-35).

Some may have been thus led to ask, "Who is my brother?" Those who continue to believe Jesus, the man, is also the Christ, deity, are born of God, or His sons. God is the one who begat all Christians (James 1:17-18) and those begotten of Him would all be brethren in the Lord. Thus, when one loves God, who begat him, he should also love his brethren, who were likewise begotten of the Father (1 John 5:1).

The Christian's love of God and keeping His commandments is the perfect display of his love for the brethren. For example, Galatians 6:1-2 commands all the spiritual ones to restore brethren overtaken in faults and help bear one another's burdens. Hebrews 10:24-25 commands Christians to provoke one another unto love and good works by being present at all the assemblies of the saints to encourage them to keep on going despite daily pressures. By giving careful attention to himself and the doctrine, Paul told Timothy he would be able to save himself and his listeners (1 Timothy 4:16). So, Christians in the first century were given a number of instructions intended to direct them in properly loving God through displaying love for their brothers (1 John 5:2).

Keeping On Keeping God's Commandments

If anyone really loves God, he will keep on keeping His commandments (1 John 5:3; John 14:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). John explained that those commandments are not burdensome, which Thayer says means "the keeping of which is grievous". One could refer to other passages that speak of the daily bearing of one's cross or entering the strait gate and wonder at John's words here. However, when compared to the law of Moses or the terrible judgment that will fall on those who do not keep God's commandments, the Christians' burden truly is light (Matthew 11:28-30). Remember, Jesus' strength and support belong to those who seek to do the Father's will (Philippians 4:13; Matthew 28:20; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Another reason God's commandments should not be considered burdensome is found in 1 John 4:4. All that Christians have to give up will result in victory over sin, Satan and all the forces of evil. The Christians' faith gives them such victory. Notice how closely faith and the keeping of God's commandments are tied together in John's thinking. There is great overcoming power in believing Jesus is the resurrected Son of God (1 John 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

Discussion Questions

1. In what sense do you believe man was created in the image of God?
2. Explain how Christians could call one another brethren.
3. Tell some of the instructions you find which would direct Christians in proper love of their brethren.
4. What will one who loves God be sure to do?
5. Explain why you do not think God's commandments are burdensome.

Lesson 12

"That You May Know"

1 John 5:6-21

Witnesses to Jesus' Sonship

The Gnostics taught that Jesus was a man, and Christ, the Deity, came upon Him at baptism and left Him before the crucifixion. John says Jesus was the same both in the waters of baptism and at the shedding of blood in His death (Matthew 3:13-17; John 19:31-35). The Spirit bore witness to Jesus' Deity by descending like a dove at His baptism (John 1:32-34). He continued, and continues, to bear witness as to Jesus' death and resurrection through the testimony of the apostles (Acts 2). His witness can be relied upon since it is true, as John personally knew and could testify (John 16:13). Thus, it can be said there are three that testify to Jesus' Lordship and Deity. The Father called him Son at His baptism, transfiguration and resurrection. The Spirit, by descending at Christ's baptism and helping in the resurrection, also testified to His Sonship. Of course, Jesus also laid claim to being God's Son (1 John 5:6-8).

Men accept the testimony of other men and should much more readily accept that of God. God has surely testified that Jesus is His Son (Matthew 17:1-5). When the Christian keeps on believing on Jesus as God's Son, the Holy Spirit abides in him as proof of his faithfulness (Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6). God's testimony in scripture is sufficient to prove Jesus is God. To reject that scriptural testimony is to reject God's witness and call Him a liar (1 John 5:9-10).

The Means and Results of Having Eternal Life

Jesus was sent to open the way to eternal life in heaven, and to believe on Him, in the obedient way already discussed in earlier comments, is to gain that life (John 17:3). Having eternal life in heaven is contingent upon having the Son, or being a Christian (John 20:30-31; Mark 10:29-30). In 1:4, John had said he wrote that their joy would be made full. Certainly, there is no fuller joy than in knowing one will be in heaven. As long as one walks in the light (1:7), he can know eternal life is his promised possession. Literally, John was writing to those who would keep on believing (1 John 5:11-13). How can one really claim to believe Jesus is God's Son and fail to obey Him?

Having eternal life as a promise from God also gives the Christian confidence in his prayer life. God will answer if Christians pray in accord with His will (compare Mark 11:15, 24; John 14:14; 15:7; James 4:3; 1 John 3:22). Christians can be sure God will give them those things which are in their best interests (Matthew 7:7-11). They are so sure that God hears them that they can know He answers their prayers, even though the answer may not come in the way anticipated (1 John 5:14-15).

"Sin Leading to Death"

John next wrote about a "sin leading to death." Several other passages in scripture appear to speak of that sin (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-27; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 1 Timothy 5:6). If all of these are describing the same sin, we conclude it involves a state of rebellion against God from which the sinner will not repent. Turner uses Lamech as an example of one committing such sin (Genesis 4:16-24). Woods notes God will forgive confessed sins (1:8) and concludes this is unconfessed sin, which would coincide with our thought on the rebellious nature of the sin unto death.

Christians can pray for the brother who has a pliable heart and can still be moved to repent (1 John 5:16; compare Galatians 6:1-2).

One might conclude that sin is natural, cannot be avoided, therefore will not hurt. Lest one reach that conclusion, John says all violations of God's commandments are sin. Such need not destroy the soul, if one is willing to confess and let the Advocate plead his case (1 John 5:17; 1:9-2:1). Christians will not continue in sin but will turn from their sins when confronted with them. As long as one stays on God's side, the devil will not be able to harm him (Romans 8:31). Christians are God's children, while the worldly minded are children of the devil (1 John 5:18-19).

Jesus came from God to help man understand things pertaining to eternal life. Anyone can know Jesus, and the Father through Him, and abide in Him in the church. So, Christians know the one God and have eternal life. Because of all John had said before, God's children should avoid false gods that eternal life might remain theirs (1 John 5:20-21).

Discussion Questions

1. In your own words, explain when Jesus was man and when He was God.
2. Who testified to the Sonship of Jesus?
3. What assures one that he has eternal life?
4. How can a Christian be sure his prayers are heard?

5. Explain what John was talking about when he mentioned the "sin leading to death."
6. Why will Christians not continue in sin, according to John? How can they know God?

Lesson 13
**"To The Elect Lady
and Her Children"**
2 John 1-13

"To the Elect Lady and Her Children"

John is thought of as the author of 2 John. This is because of the testimony of ancient authorities as well as the fact that this letter is so similar in style and basic thoughts to 1 John. Since the writer uses the definite article "the" in reference to himself as an elder, we assume this refers to his age and not an office he held.

The rules of Biblical interpretation tell us to take something literally unless the literal meaning contradicts other clear teachings of scripture. On that basis, we conclude the elect lady, or elect Cyria, was a literal lady who had literal children. Some have thought this was a church and the children its members, but the context would have to be taken figuratively when nothing demands it. John truly loved her, as did many others who knew the truth, probably because of her great service. One reason John loved her was because he was of the truth and she was in the truth. Despite all the problems soon to come, John was confident the truth would continue to abide in himself and other Christians (2 John 1-2).

It takes God's grace to save sinful man (Ephesians 2:8). He had mercy on men in the terrible grip of sin, and that brought a peace beyond man's ability to express himself (1 Peter 1:3; Philippians 4:6-7). Grace, mercy and peace come from the Father and Son, which, among other things, shows their oneness. They belong to the Christian because of obedience to the truth and the love that flows out of it (2 John 3).

John had somehow met some of the lady's children away from home and was happy to report they were living faithfully. To live in accord with truth is synonymous with keeping the

Father's commandments. Since her children were living faithful lives, John also encouraged her to love the brethren, as had been taught from the beginning of the gospel. Note, John says "we", since he was likewise directed by the Lord to love the brethren (John 13:34-35). If one really loves the brethren, he will obey the commandments and thereby set a good example before those he loves (2 John 4-6; 1 Timothy 4:12-16; 1 John 2:7-11).

Beware of Deceivers

John warned the elect lady that "many deceivers have gone out into the world." The word "deceivers" comes from the Greek word for wandering or roving, according to Thayer. They traveled in packs preying on the gullible and leading them into error. Particularly, they denied the incarnation of Jesus, thus denying His Deity and making them be in the spirit of the anti-Christ. John's warning was particularly important because it is possible to work hard for salvation and yet to lose it (1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12; Philippians 2:12). His hope was that he and all other Christians might receive a full wage for their labors in service to the King (2 John 7-8).

The only way for a Christian to be sure he receives a full reward for his works in the gospel cause is through strictly adhering to the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 7:21-23). When one does not remain in that doctrine, he loses fellowship with God. The word translated "transgresses" literally means goes onward. Evidently, these false teachers said they were progressive and ahead in their thinking, but they had gone too far since they went beyond God (2 John 9).

Hospitality and False Teachers

The elect lady was confronted with the problem of how to treat those false teachers John warned against. A Christian cannot in any way appear to support those who teach error. Christians are to be hospitable (Romans 12:13), but can refuse to extend such to any who do not present the simple teachings of Christ. Money for lodgings was scarce in John's day, so teachers depended on the saints to open their homes. John said this good sister should not do so to those who taught contrary to the will of Christ which would make her appear to be in sympathy with them. To in any way encourage a false teacher is to become a partner in their false teachings (2 John 10-11).

John had many more things he would have liked to write but expressed the hope that he could sit down with the lady and her children in their home and talk further. Her sister was obviously a Christian, since she is also called "elect." Some of her children must have been near John as he wrote, since he sent their greetings (2 John 12-13).

Discussion Questions

1. Tell who you think wrote 2 John. Also, to whom was the letter addressed?

2. What 3 things did John desire for the letter's recipients? Briefly tell what each of these stands for.

3. In your own words, describe the "deceivers" John was concerned about.

4. What can a Christian do to be sure he receives a full reward for his work? How is such lost?

5. What danger is there in giving hospitality to false teachers?

6. Who was apparently with John when he wrote this letter?

Lesson 14

"To The Beloved Gaius"

3 John 1-14

Gaius

Just as he did at the beginning of 2 John, the apostle describes himself as aged in addressing this personal letter to Gaius, whom he loved. The term here for beloved suggests a very close relationship. John sincerely loved him. Gaius had taken care of his soul's needs, so

now John prayed that he might prosper financially and in health equally as well (3 John 1-2).

The apostle knew of Gaius' spiritual health because some brethren had reported to John concerning his faithful life of service. John's heart was made light because of this report. It may well be that Gaius was one of John's converts. A worldly man might list a number of things that make him happy but the follower of Christ rejoices when the cause of the truth is furthered in a life (3 John 3-4; 1 Corinthians 13:6; Philippians 4:14-17).

Helping Traveling Preachers

Traveling preachers went from place to place preaching the truth during the first century. John commended Gaius for supporting their efforts by taking them in and providing for their needs (Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Timothy 3:2; 4:9-10). Those he had helped had reported his good deeds to the church where John was. It seems these same men were about to make another preaching trip, and John encouraged Gaius to again help them on their way (Romans 15:24; Titus 3:13). Woods suggests it was customary in that day to start out with a guest and go a short way with him on his trip thereby encouraging his efforts (3 John 5-6).

These missionaries did their work for the sake of Christ. They refused pay from non-believers, likely to avoid criticism as to their purpose for preaching (1 Corinthians 9:1-19; 2 Corinthians 11:1-9). By taking such men in and helping them on their way one became a partner in their efforts (3 John 7-8; contrast 2 John 9).

Diotrephes

Diotrephes was a man that liked to be in first position. So, when a letter came from John, perhaps carried by the missionaries just discussed, he suppressed the letter and refused to allow the preachers to come in and be with the saints. He falsely accused John with evil words. He refused the traveling preachers and forbade others to receive them. Anyone who helped them, he cast out of the church. John said he would deal with the matter when he came. John urged Gaius to imitate good works because evil workers like Diotrephes did not really know God. (3 John 9-11).

Demetrius and Some Closing Words

Demetrius may have been one of the letter bearers who had been refused. At least, he is a contrast to the bad example of Diotrephes. Men spoke well of him generally, but public opinion can be wrong. The life of truth he lived also commended him (Matthew 7:15-20). John agreed with the good report of public opinion and the truth and Gaius knew he would not lie.

John, like so many of us, had more to say, but evidently, wanted to do so in person. He expressed a desire to see Gaius soon. His prayer was that he would be at peace. Friends sent greetings through John, and John wanted Gaius to convey greetings to other friends who were with him.

Discussion Questions

1. Tell all you can about Gaius.
2. What are some of the things which will make a spiritual man happy?
3. How did Gaius assist the travelling preachers?
4. How can anyone be a partner in a missionary's work?
5. Describe Diotrephes and the dangers associated with his actions.
6. What type of man was Demetrius? What witnesses to this were cited by John?

Lesson 15

"Contend Earnestly for the Faith"

Jude 1-7

Assurance for the Christian

The author calls himself Jude, or Judas, which literally means "renowned." He also says he is the brother of James, who is thought to be the one so outstanding in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Galatians 2:9). If so, he would also have been the brother of our Lord (Galatians

1:19). That would likewise make Jude Jesus' brother (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Like his brothers, Jude did not believe Jesus was the Son of God during Christ's personal ministry on earth (John 7:1-9). However, Christ's resurrection seems to have convinced him since he is numbered as one of those in the upper room in Acts 1:12-14. It also appears Jude was married. His wife traveled with him on his journeys (1 Corinthians 9:5).

He calls himself "a servant of Jesus Christ." The word rendered "servant" literally means "slave," not as one forced to work, but one who willingly chooses to serve another. He is writing to the "called," which includes all the followers of Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15). The called are said to be "sanctified by God the Father." That is, Christians were set apart by the gift of God's own Son on the cross of Calvary (John 3:16-17; Romans 5:8; 8:37-39). They are also said to be "preserved" in Jesus Christ (Jude 1). In order to be so preserved, Jude urged them to keep themselves in the love of God (verse 21). Jude's desire for them was that God's love would be multiplied to them along with His mercy and peace. Woods said that mercy, peace and love are the three blessings needed most by readers of Jude from his day to the present (Jude 2).

The Believer and the Faith

Jude showed the feeling of warmth he had in connection with those to whom the epistle was addressed when he called them "beloved." Apparently, he had already been planning to write an epistle on the "common salvation," but turned to the more urgent problem, that is dealt with in the writing, called to his attention. He had heard of false teachers and the spreading of their doctrines. He then wrote to prevent the addressees from being lead astray and to urge them to the defense of the gospel.

The word translated "contend earnestly" literally means "to wrestle" and indicates the type of strong defense that should be made for the gospel in the face of any foe. The word here translated "faith" is said by Vine to be "by metonymy, what is believed, the contents of belief, faith" (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words*). That faith was delivered "once for all," which Vine says means, "of what is perpetual validity, not requiring repetition." All of that which Christians believe has been delivered for all time (Jude 3).

Apostates Described

Jude explained that false teachers were the cause of his writing. Woods says the idea of "crept in unnoticed" is that of entering in by the side door, without revealing their motive of leading the saints astray. This description might be compared with Galatians 2:4; 2 Timothy 3:6 and 2 Peter 2:1-2. These false teachers were the ones who were written of before, probably in the Old Testament. What was written concerning them is described as being "marked out for this condemnation" (Jude 4).

The false teachers were likewise described as "ungodly men," which seems to indicate they were not pious or reverent. These were the same type of men that reaped their reward at the

time of the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:5-6). Being of such a nature, they turned the grace of God, which is salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9), into a support of gross fleshly indulgence. Thayer says "licentiousness" is unbridled lust, excess and shamelessness. As Woods points out, there is similarity between these men and those in 2 Peter 2:18-19.

There is some question as to the meaning of the words "only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." The A. S. V. puts "the only Master, and our Lord Jesus Christ" in a footnote as a possible rendering. Some think it refers to the Father and the Son. The title "Master" is applied to Christ in 2 Peter 2:1, and the characterizing word "only" is used more properly of God, as it is in verse 25 of this book. (See *The Pulpit Commentary* for a fuller discussion.)

Apostasy in Old Testament History

In verse 5, Jude submitted his first bit of evidence to prove evildoers will be condemned. He said he wanted to remind them, though, as the American Standard Version has it, they knew all things "once for all." When Jude says they "knew this," it seems he was telling them they knew all things pertinent to this problem and simply needed to have it called to their attention. Paul discussed the same events in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. The Hebrew writer, possibly also Paul, dealt with this in 3:16-18. Israel had been brought out of Egypt by the hand of God. They were a mighty nation. Yet, only two of those above the age of twenty were allowed to enter the promised land. The basic category of the sins that the people committed was that of unbelief. If God would punish all of the members of that chosen nation, save two, it is easily seen that the false teachers would reap their reward.

Angels who sinned were presented by Jude as the second bit of evidence that God will punish evildoers. Again, there is a similar reference in 2 Peter 2:4. These angels left their "offices" or "positions," which is the literal meaning of the word translated "proper domain." They were put in bonds from which they will never escape. They are being held in bondage until the day of judgment when they will be judged along with all evil men (Jude 6; Matthew 25:41).

The third piece of evidence comes from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Admah and Zeboim were cities near there which would have likewise been considered cities of the plain. The city of Zoar, which was in the area, was spared when Lot interceded for it so he might have a place of refuge. The whole story is told in Genesis 19 (Deuteronomy 29:23; Jeremiah 20:16; Isaiah 13:19; Romans 9:29). Woods says the words "set forth" mean "to lie exposed" like a corpse laying out for burial. Further, the word "example" means to "exhibit" or "show." These cities, then, illustrate the vengeance the Lord takes on people of this kind. Their sins are similar to those listed in Romans 1:24-32. It was truly a terrible sin and the punishment was equally terrible. Their punishment was so permanent that it is likened unto eternal fire. These examples leave little hope for false teachers (Jude 7).

Discussion Questions

1. Tell what you know about the author of Jude.
2. What was the main purpose of Jude's writing? What does this mean to you?
3. Give a description of the false teachers with whom Jude was concerned.
4. What was the first example of apostasy in the Old Testament to which Jude referred?
5. What was the next bit of evidence presented by Jude to show God will punish evil doers?

6. Name the cities of the plain which were punished by God. Why did Jude say God punished them?

Lesson 16
**Contending With
Apostasy**
Jude 8-25

The Apostates in Jude's Day

In verse 8, Jude showed the false teachers had committed sins similar to those committed by those in the Old Testament examples he had previously given. They had committed sins of the flesh that were of the lowest nature. They showed no respect for authority and it did not bother them to say bad things against people in high positions.

"Michael the archangel," or "chief," or "captain" of the angels, is mentioned only in Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7-9 in the New Testament. He is pictured as the protector of Israel against the world's pagan powers in Daniel 10:13, 21; and 12:1. Jude said he was in a discussion over the body of Moses. While we know nothing more of this discussion, it can easily be seen Jude was making a point about this high angelic being and the fact that he would not even say an evil word against the devil. There is quite a contrast between this action and those of the false teachers.

Not only did the false teachers speak evil, they even spoke against things about which they did not know or understand. The only things they understood concerned the fulfillment of physical appetites. They did that to the point of their own destruction. They could only look forward to woe because they were like Cain. He followed his own desires instead of walking the path of obedient service (Genesis 4:7). Balaam simply did his works to gain monetary profit (Numbers 22:5-7). Korah rebelled against Moses' and God's authority in the wilderness in his lusty hunger for power (Numbers 16:1-35). These men are examples of the type of attitude the false teachers must have portrayed (Jude 10-11).

Apostasy Illustrated from the Natural Realm

Like rocks hidden in the water, false teachers were unrecognized trouble ready to sink the unprepared Christian. They acted as if they were shepherds of the flock so they could feed themselves. In the dry climate of Palestine, their personalities were best represented as clouds that would seem to promise a much wanted rain but only leave the land dry and disappointed. They were like barren fruit trees in autumn. They should have had fruit but it was as if they had been plucked up by the roots. They were dead in the realm of fruit bearing and devoid of any

life (Jude 12).

The wave illustration was used in Isaiah 57:20. It simply says the false teachers are like the foamy waves which promised much but carried nothing of real value. The star idea may refer to shooting comets or falling meteors leaving only darkness in their trail. Thus, the ultimate end of the false teachers was set forth (Jude 13).

Apostasy in Old Testament Prophecy

Enoch was listed as one of the great men of faith (Hebrews 11:5). Genesis says "God took him" (Genesis 5:21-24). It would appear he was translated to heaven much like Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-12). Enoch did not have to experience death as other men do, but was taken up from the earth not to be found any longer. God testified that Enoch pleased Him. It is not surprising that this seventh person in man's genealogy was a prophet. By inspiration, Jude recorded one of his prophecies. It concerned the coming of the Lord with his angels (Jude 14; Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

The prophecy also spoke of the promised judgment (Hebrews 9:27). The point being, the Lord will punish the ungodly for their sins, which were of an ungodly character. Woods suggests Jude adds detail to Enoch's prophecy. He described the ungodly people as those who rebelled against their lot in life and thought God was unfair. Their lives were lived only to fill their fleshly desires. They used words puffed up with sound but lacking meaning. They used favoritism so they might gain a few of this world's advantages (Jude 15-16).

Apostasy Described

Jude pleaded with the faithful Christians to remember the teachings of the apostles. Jesus had said those men would relate all of His teachings and commandments (verse 17; Matthew 28:18-20; John 16:12-15). The apostles had foretold the coming of men who would mock the truth. Jude saw them as men who would not be pious. Instead, Jude said they were only seeking to fulfill their own fleshly desires. They, according to Jude, made a joke out of Christ's teachings, especially concerning His second coming (Jude 18; 2 Peter 3:1-3).

The false teachers of whom Jude told were men who drew lines of separation. They caused Christians to be pitted against one another. Woods says the word here translated "sensual" is translated "natural" in 1 Corinthians 2:14. Man is composed of three things -- body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). To pursue the natural would be to fulfill the soul's desires while rejecting the spirit. Thereby, one would be disallowing closeness to God. This is true because true worshippers of God must worship in spirit and in truth (Jude 19; John 4:24).

The Believer and the Faith

In contrast to the ungodly, the faithful were to build upon their faith and pray in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26; Ephesians 6:18). The idea of building on the faith that already exists is used in other places and in other ways, such as Hebrews 6. Jude's desire was

that Christians might stay in contact with the rewards found in God's love for them. These rewards were theirs through obedience (John 14:9-10, 15, 21; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6). The mercy of Jesus for which Jude prayed is found in salvation (Jude 20-21).

Clearly, the lost can be divided into two categories. There are those lost through being honestly mistaken and those intentionally lost. Jude urged Christians to be patient and loving with those honestly doubting the truth so they could be led to Christ. However, he warned them to exercise care with those in deeper trouble than the honest doubters. They would have to be snatched away from the very fires of hell. Of course, anyone trying to save them would have to beware lest, in pulling them out of trouble, they too should be spotted with the sins of the flesh (Jude 22-23).

Assurance for the Christian

Jude closed his book with a prayer. It was directed to Jesus, our protector. He can keep one from stumbling, which will, in turn, keep him from falling. One who avoids falling would receive many blessings that would produce joy in his life. Jude called Jesus God, just as He is depicted in John 1:1. Jesus' greatness and the attributes of it are said to have lasted from the time before the beginning and will stretch into eternity. So, Jude closed with a tremendous statement of his trust in Jesus and His wondrous powers (Jude 24-25).

Discussion Questions

1. What did Jude tell his readers about Michael the archangel? How did he contrast this with the false teachers?
2. In your own words, describe Jude's use of things found in nature which demonstrate the danger of false teaching.
3. Tell about Enoch's prophesy as related by Jude.

4. How did Jude describe the apostates?

5. What two categories can the lost be divided into? How should other Christians relate to them?

6. Use Jude's prayer to write one of your own.

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Will and Tiercie Falls, my mother's parents, and Mary Lou Davidson, my wife's grandmother. Because of these three, their descendants learned the importance of

knowing they have eternal life.