

1 JOHN

Author :

John one of the original apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Date :

Probably sometime between 85 and 95 AD.

Themes :

This letter is written to all those who, by God's grace, have received new spiritual birth in Christ. They are God's dearly loved children (2:1,12,13,18,28; 3:7; 4:4; 5:21). They are members of the family and household of God, and John writes that they should behave in a way worthy of this great truth. That is, they should live in fellowship with God and with each other (1:3-7), confess any sin they might be guilty of and obtain forgiveness (1:8 - 2:2), obey the commands of God the Father (2:3-7), and love one another (3:11-20). Three key words of this letter are "life" (1:1,2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11,12,13,20), "light" (1:5,7; 2:8,9,10), and "love" (3:11-18; 4:7-12). Another key word is "know" (2:3,5; 4:6,7; 5:13,18), and an important theme is assurance – how we can know we have really been born into God's family.

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1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked on, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life 2 (for the life was revealed, and we have seen, and bear witness and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was revealed to us), 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly our

1:1 "Beginning" - Gen 1:1; John 1:1.

"We" - John speaks of all the original disciples of Christ. When Jesus was on earth they knew Him personally, heard what He taught and saw what He did. Compare 2 Pet 1:16; John 15:27; Acts 4:20.

"Handled" - see Luke 24:39; John 20:27. This was after Christ's resurrection.

"Word of life" - Christ Himself is the Word, God's fullest revelation to mankind. And He is eternal life (5:20; John 1:4; 5:26; 14:6), and He came to bring eternal life to people (John 10:10; 6:51). The words He spoke were also "life" (John 6:63). And His gospel produces spiritual life (Rom 5:21; 6:23).

1:2 "Was revealed" - eternal life appeared when Christ appeared (John 1:14; 2 Tim 1:10).

"Eternal life" - 5:11,12; John 3:16.

"With the Father" - John 1:2; 17:5. Christ was not the Father, but is with the Father in the one Godhead. See notes at John 17:1,5; 1 Cor 8:5,6; 2 John 3.

1:3 "We have seen" - this is the third time in three verses he says this. He is saying very emphatically that he and the other apostles did not pass along information gathered from others, or stories they had invented. They knew exactly what they were talking about because they personally had seen and heard Jesus.

"Fellowship" - Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 13:14; Phil 3:10. The Greek word means sharing together. John had good reasons for proclaiming the truth of Christ. This is one. Others appears in v 4; 2:1; 12-14,21; 5:13.

"With the Father. . .with his Son" - John distinguishes between these two persons of the Godhead (notes on the Trinity at Matt 3:16,17; etc), but they are so united that to have fellowship with the one is to have fellowship with the other also. Other references on Christ's deity at Phil 2:6; Luke 2:11. Fellowship with God means to know Him (John 17:3), to share in His joy, His peace, His thoughts, His work on earth. Only believers in Christ know God, and have fellowship with God. No one else has true enlightenment or spiritual life (5:11,12).

1:4 "Joy" - Luke 2:10; John 15:11; 16:22,24; 17:13; Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22. Joy is the result of truth received into the heart and practiced in the life. So John writes the truth to them which he had learned from Christ. Complete knowledge of the truth of Christ and complete obedience to it will

fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we write these things to you, so that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message we have heard from him, and declare to you: God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his

mean complete joy.

1:5 "God is light" - not physical light, of course, but spiritual light. In the New Testament darkness signifies sin and ignorance of spiritual things; light signifies holiness and truth - Matt 4:16; Luke 2:32; John 1:4,5; 3:19,20; 8:12; 11:10; 12:36,46; Acts 26:18; Rom 13:12; 2 Cor 4:4,6; Eph 5:8,9,13,14; 1 Tim 6:16.

"No darkness at all" - there is much evil in the world, but there is none whatever in God. He did not create it and He does not approve of it in any form. He is absolutely holy and gloriously pure (Lev 20:7; Isa 6:3).

1:6 "If we say" - it is impossible to have fellowship with holiness and truth while living in sin and error. Choosing sin is the same as rejecting God, and if we reject Him how can we share with Him in anything? See 2 Cor 6:14. The sad fact is that there are many who claim to know God who do not know Him, and they prove they do not know Him by their manner of life (Titus 1:16).

"Lying" - such people are either deceived or trying to deceive others. In either case their claim is utterly false.

"Not practicing the truth" - simply hearing the truth or studying the truth is not enough. We must put the truth into practice in our lives.

1:7 What does it mean to walk in the light? John shows what it means in the rest of this letter. It is the opposite of walking in the darkness of sin, ignorance and error. It means to renounce sin and all that is contrary to God's Word, and to put into practice what His Word tells us. It is to be open toward God, trying to hide nothing of what we are and do. If we would walk in the light we must first have the light. It is the work of God to bring us into it - 2 Cor 4:6; 1 Pet 2:9; Col 1:12,13. Being in the kingdom of light we are responsible to behave accordingly (2:6).

"Fellowship" - true Christian fellowship can exist only when believers are walking in the light. Sin and error will kill fellowship.

"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin"-believers sometimes sin in thought, word, or deed (2:1; Jam 3:2; Gal 2:11-13; 5:17; Rom 7:18; 1 Kings 8:46; etc). If they walk in the light God will forgive their sins, cleanse them away, and blot them out as if they had never existed. He does this on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (2:2). This process goes on continually (the Greek verb

Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not

is in the present continuous tense – “goes on cleansing”).

1:8 If Christ’s blood cleanses us from every sin, does this mean we are sinless? Not at all. Lest anyone should mistakenly think so John immediately makes the point clear. No human being on earth, no believer is sinless, not even the holiest. Paul, the great and holy apostle, spoke of sin living in him (Rom 7:17). See also Matt 7:11; Rom 7:14-25; 8:12; Gal 5:16,17; 1 Tim 1:15; Jam 3:2. None of us in this life ever gets beyond the need of confessing sin and of the blood of Christ cleansing from sin (Matt 6:12).

If any of us think our nature is sinless “we deceive ourselves” – that is, we are leading ourselves astray. We are persuading ourselves that something is true which is not true, and we are responsible for doing this, and so guilty of doing wrong. Thinking we are sinless comes out of our own efforts to think so, not from God’s Word.

“The truth is not in us” – whatever other truth may be in us, the truth about sin and cleansing from sin is not in us, if we think our nature is sinless. In such case we are not facing the truth, but evading it, calling sin by a different name and excusing it. In this way falsity takes the place of truth in our hearts.

All believers should aim to be perfect, but none achieves it – Phil 3:12. As believers we should aim to live without ever sinning (2:1), but we do not achieve this either. If we do not sin knowingly, we do unknowingly, and sins done ignorantly are still sins and not something else (compare Lev 4:1,2). If we do not sin by what we deliberately do, we sin by not doing what we should do (see notes at Num 32:23 and Matt 25:42,43). Who of us can say we never fail to do what we should do?

1:9 “We” – John is writing to believers (2:1,12-14) and he includes himself in what he says. He knew the need of all believers to confess their sins – Matt 6:12; Luke 11:4.

“Confess” – the Greek word means to say the same thing as another person, to agree, to admit that an accusation is true, etc. Confessing sins means to say the same thing that God says about them. We must not call them by some other name such as mistakes or errors of judgment, etc. Anything in thought, word, or deed in any way contrary to God’s standard of perfect righteousness and holiness is sin. Also anything left undone that should be done is sin (Jam 4:17; Matt 25:41-46; 1 Sam 12:23; etc).

Committing sin makes us guilty and we need forgiveness. So we must agree with God, call our sins by their names, and ask God for forgiveness. Confessing our sins

sinned, we make him a liar, and his Word is not in us.

2 My little children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus

and walking in the light go hand in hand. God’s light exposes our sins (Eph 5:13,14), and as they are exposed we are to confess and forsake them. Of course our confession should be to God for He is the one who can forgive us.

“Faithful” – Ps 33:4; 111:7,8; 145:13; 146:6; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Tim 2:13; Heb 10:23; 11:11; 1 Pet 4:19. God is always faithful to His Word, to His plan to save people, and to His own nature. He is a forgiving God – Ex 34:7; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:5; 99:8; 103:3; Dan 9:9; Micah 7:18; Matt 6:12; 9:2; Rom 4:7,8; Heb 8:12; Jam 5:15. His Word (the Bible) shows that in order to forgive the sins of people He sent His own Son to die as a sacrifice for them – John 1:29; 3:14-16. So we may be sure that He will forgive us our sins if we repent and truly desire forgiveness and cleansing.

“Just” – Deut 32:4; Ps 9:16; 36:6; 89:14; 111:7. He will forgive our sins on the basis of justice. Christ has paid for our sins, endured the penalty for them. Therefore God can justly forgive them when we repent and confess them. See 2:2; Rom 3:25,26.

“Cleanse” – v 7. God forgives our sins, blots them out forever and cleanses our consciences from all unrighteousness (Heb 9:14).

1:10 Verse 8 speaks of the present; this verse speaks of the past. God says “all have sinned” (Rom 3:9-23). If we say we have not, we are saying that God’s Word is not true, that the God of the Bible is a liar. In such case, no part of the Bible has any real place in us.

2:1 “My little children” – he considered them his spiritual children. Compare 1 Tim 1:2.

“So that you will not sin” – this is the ideal, the goal to which we should press. And this word opens up a grand possibility for all believers. Though a sinful nature is in us (1:8), we can overcome it by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. We do not need to be overcome by temptation and knowingly sin. Compare 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Cor 7:1. Having a sinful nature does not mean believers in Christ have to sin, and it gives them no excuse if they do sin, for they also have a new nature created by God in righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:24), and God’s Spirit lives in them (1 Cor 6:19).

“We have an advocate” – see Rom 8:34; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 7:25; Rom 5:9,10. Jesus is the heavenly advocate, the defense attorney, speaking to the Father on behalf of believers when they sin. Satan accuses us (Rev 12:10), Christ defends us. If a believer sins, is he destroyed? Does he lose his salvation? Is there no hope? That is not

Christ the righteous, 2 and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

3 And by this we know that we know him: If we keep his commandments. 4 He who says, "I 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 indeed the love of God is perfected. By this we know that we are in him.

6 He who says he remains in him ought to walk just as he walked.

7 Brethren, I am not writing any new command

the teaching of the Bible – 1:9.

How can they be destroyed and lose their salvation when they have such an Advocate and Defender? This is an Advocate who can defend us with perfect justice, who loves us with infinite love, who is determined to have us released from the penalty of every sin, to rescue us from God's anger against all sin. Can we doubt that He will be successful?

"Righteous" – Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14. He will not do anything in His dealings with us, or in His work as Advocate, Mediator and Defender, that is in any way contrary to perfect justice and righteousness. He can righteously defend believers when they sin because He has taken away their sins by the sacrifice of Himself.

2:2 "Propitiation" – Christ is the one who turns aside God's anger, by taking away sins. This is the meaning of the word as used in the Bible. See Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17. Compare Matt 26:28; John 3:14,15; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:19,21; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:7; Heb 9:12,28; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18.

"Sins of the whole world" – 4:14; John 1:29; 2 Cor 5:14; 1 Tim 2:6; Heb 2:9. Men are not lost because Christ has not died as a sacrifice for them. They are lost because they do not accept this sacrifice and do not believe in Him. They choose darkness rather than light, sin rather than holiness and God. This is their condemnation.

2:3-6 "We know" – v 5; 3:14,19,24; 4:13; 5:13. Here John is not speaking of knowing about God, but of knowing Him personally. The Word "know" is a key word in this letter. It appears 33 times (more than in any other letter of the New Testament). In this verse John speaks of knowledge based on evidence. People can think they know God when they do not. They can be deceived by some emotional or mystical experience. There are powerfully deceptive forces in the world which lead people astray – Jer 17:9; Heb 3:13; Rev 12:9.

John insists that we should not think we know God unless there is proof of this knowledge in the way we live. The true knowledge of God has a profound effect on people (John 17:3). It changes their hearts, their thinking, their behavior. If there is no change, we may be sure there is no true knowledge of God. There are those who claim to have enlightenment, to know the ultimate truth about God and to be perfectly

to you, but an old command, which you have had from the beginning. The old command is the word which you have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, I am writing a new command to you, a thing that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light is now shining. 9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10 He who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause of stumbling in him. 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because

one with Him. But do they keep the commandments of Jesus Christ? If not, their wisdom and experience is deceptive and useless.

What is the proof that we know God?

Obedience (v 3)

God's love in the heart (v 5)

A life that follows the pattern Jesus gave us (v 6).

"Keep his commandments" – 3:24; 5:3; Matt 28:20; John 14:15,23; Acts 4:19; 5:29; Rom 6:16; 16:26; Heb 5:9. True believers receive Jesus as Lord as well as Saviour (note at Acts 22:10).

"Liar" – v 8; 4:20; John 8:44.

"Love" – 4:7,8 – another key word in this letter. It appears 35 times (more than in any other book of the New Testament). The real proof of love toward God is obedience to Him. All else is mere sentiment and deception (John 14:15). Truth planted in the heart results in love and in obedience.

"In Him" – see John 17:21-23; Rom 6:3-8; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:1,3.

"Walk just as he walked" – see 1 Pet 2:21; compare Eph 5:1; 1 Thess 1:6.

2:7 "Have heard" – 1:1-3. The message is who Christ is, what He is, and what He wants us to be and do. See 3:23. John was not writing some strange new thing which he had invented (compare 2 Pet 1:16).

2:8 "New" – like the old command but emphasized a new and put in anew way.

"Now shining" – before Christ came into the world there was great spiritual darkness everywhere (Isa 60:2). He came as a light (John 8:12), sent forth His disciples as lights (Matt 5:14), and gives light to people through His gospel. This light began to shine in Israel but in John's day soon began to spread throughout the Roman empire. Now it shines in every country of the world.

2:9-11 Love is the test of whether we are in light or in darkness. People may think or say all sorts of things about being in the light and being enlightened, and they can deceive themselves and others. But we can know what they are by their behavior. Love and light go together; hate and darkness go together.

"Brother" – probably means here another Christian, but John is not suggesting that it is all right for Christians to hate those who are not Christians. See Matt 5:44; etc. If there is God's love in our hearts we will love

that darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you have known him *who is* from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one.

I am writing to you, little children, because you have known the Father.

14 I have written to you, fathers, because you have known him *who is* from the beginning.

I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

everyone, though we will have a special love for fellow believers.

"No cause of stumbling" (v 10) – this probably means that there is nothing in him to make others stumble. God's love in our hearts will make us the sort of people who will not give others reason to stumble spiritually. Lack of love among Christians is a significant stumblingblock to many people. On stumbling see Rom 14:13; 1 Cor 8:9; 10:32; 2 Cor 6:3.

"Where he is going" – John 12:35; Prov 4:19.

"Blinded" – compare 2 Cor 4:4.

2:12 "Are forgiven" – 1:7,9.

"His name's sake" – we are forgiven because of who Christ is and because of what He has done for us, and because we have believed and accepted God's revelation about Him, and because He wants us to be forgiven.

2:13 "Known" – v 3; John 17:3; 2 Cor 4:6; Matt 11:27.

"Who is from the beginning" – 1:1 – he is referring to Christ.

"Overcome" – see 4:4; 5:4; Rev 2:7; 12:11; 21:7. The wicked one is Satan. People "overcome" him when they repent, trust in Christ and begin to live a true Christian life.

"The Father" – v 1; Matt 5:16 (note).

2:14 "Strong" – they had the physical strength of youth and, far more importantly, the spiritual strength God gave them to overcome Satan.

"Word of God remains in you" – vs 24,27; John 15:7; Ps 119:11; Col 3:16.

2:15 John now appeals to all and gives a command to all.

"World" – 3:1,13; 4:5; 5:19. This is another key word in this letter, appearing 20 times. It means the system that has been developed by sinful men apart from God; the society, the aims, the thoughts, the religions, the ways of living that come out of man's fallen nature. According to God's Word the world does not know God (John 14:17; 15:21). It does not know what believers are (1 John 3:1). It hates Christ and believers (3:13; John 15:18,24). And it is controlled by Satan (5:19; Eph 2:1,2). God has chosen believers out of the world to be His own special people (John 15:19; 17:6,14,16). All of this is reason enough

15 Do not love the world, or the things *that are* in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that *is* in the world – the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the pride of life – is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passes away, and its desires *with it*; but whoever does the will of God continues on forever.

18 Little children, it is the last hour, and *just* as you have heard that antichrist will come, even now there are many antichrists. By this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us. But *they* for them not to love the world.

"If . . . the love of the Father is not in him" – this "world" is utterly opposed to all that the one true God is and desires, therefore to love it is to show a complete lack of love for Him. What shall we say, then, of those Christians who run after the world and imitate the world and long for the things of the world? They do not know God or love God.

2:16 "All" – there is no exception. There is nothing in this fallen world worthy of a believer's love. Desires that come from man's fallen nature, desires that come because of what man sees, pride and exalting self – these are the only things in the world – compare Gen 8:21; Matt 15:19; Rom 1:28-32. And so we must not be conformed to it – Rom 12:2.

"Flesh" – see the note at Rom 7:5.

2:17 "Passes away" – God will judge the world, punish it, and put it away forever (Acts 17:31; Isa 24:1-13; 2 Pet 3:10-13).

"Does the will of God" – Matt 7:21. Notice again John's emphasis on doing, not merely believing, though he well knew that we are saved by grace through faith. Compare James 2:14-26. True faith produces a great change in one's life which results in a mind to obey God. See note at Acts 22:10. God's will is for us to believe in Christ, receive Him as Lord and Savior, obey the gospel and follow Him. They are the ones who will live forever with God. All others will have to experience "the second death" (Rev 20:14,15).

2:18 "Last hour" – compare Acts 2:17; Rom 13:11,12; Jam 5:3; 1 Pet 1:20; Rev 1:3. This last hour is still going on. Perhaps we are in the last minutes of this last hour. Compare 2 Pet 3:8.

"Antichrist" – v 22; 4:3; 2 John 7; 2 Thess 2:3,4. The antichrist will come opposing Christ, but possibly claiming to be Christ. He will certainly claim to be God.

"Many" – compare Matt 24:4,5; 2 Cor 11:13-15.

2:19 "Out from us" – Acts 20:30. These antichrists claimed to be followers of Christ.

"Were not of us" – that is, they were not real believers, not born again, not of God's spiritual family. Their going out proves they did not belong. God's chosen ones remain in the faith (Heb 10:39; John 6:67,68; etc).

2:20 "Anointing" – compare 2 Cor 1:21,22.

went out, so that it might be made evident that all of them were not of us.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He who denies the Father and the Son is antichrist. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father, but he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

24 Therefore let that remain in you which you have heard from the beginning. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will continue in the Son and in the Father.

25 And this is the promise that he has promised us, eternal life.

This anointing is the gift of God's Spirit (3:24). It sets believers apart to be God's servants. Christ means "The Anointed One" (Matt 1:1). Believers have an anointing from Him and so are able to recognize antichrists when they appear. They will be able to discern from their teaching and behavior that they are not Christ's servants.

"The Holy One" – Mark 1:24; Acts 2:27; 3:14.

"You know all things" – John certainly did not mean that those believers knew everything that can be known about all subjects. He understood very well that only God knows like that. But those to whom he was writing had God's Spirit and had been well taught in the truth of God. They knew all the things he was writing to them were true. Now we who have the Bible and God's Spirit are also at the source of all true spiritual knowledge.

2:21 Verse 13 – anything that deviates from the truth God has revealed in the Bible is false and dangerous.

2:22 The man who says Jesus is not the anointed Messiah, the Son of God, is a liar, and the worst of all possible liars. Some people do this. They deny that Jesus combines in Himself both God's nature and man's nature, that Jesus is the eternal Son of God become man. Such people by denying the Son are denying God the Father who sent Him. Compare John 5:23. See references to Christ's deity at Phil 2:6 and Luke 2:11.

2:23 Whatever people may think, no one has God who does not believe and receive the Son of God Jesus Christ. It is absurd to think that we can have God and reject His Son. But those who believe in Jesus have God the Father as their Father.

2:24 "Heard" – 1:1; 2:7.

"If" – Heb 3:6,14; Col 1:23; 1 Cor 15:2.

"Remains" – John 15:4,5,7,9,10.

2:25 "Promised us, eternal life" – 5:11; Titus 1:2; John 3:16; 6:47.

2:26 "Astray" – 3:7; Matt 24:4,14; 2 Cor 11:3; Rev 12:9. This is the kind of world we live in – if we believe in the Lord Jesus, then Satan and his messengers do their best to deceive us and turn us away from the true

26 I have written these *things* to you concerning those who would lead you astray. 27 But the anointing which you have received from him remains in you, and you do not need any man to teach you; but as that same anointing teaches you *concerning* all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you will remain in him.

28 And now, little children, remain in him so that when he appears, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him.

3 See what kind of love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the sons of faith.

2:27 "Remains" – the Holy Spirit does not forsake believers (John 14:16; Eph 1:13,14). "To teach you" – they had already been taught the truth concerning antichrist and false teachers – that is the context here. And God's Spirit was in them to enable them to understand what they had learned. They did not need even the apostles to teach them any new truths, and they certainly did not need false teachers who claimed to have new truth and did not.

Of course, John is not denying the need of teachers in the churches. God Himself appoints them (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28), and John himself was one of them. The believers John was writing to had been taught and knew the truth, but many today have not been taught and do not know the truth. And none of us, no matter how much we think we know, should arrogantly think we cannot learn from godly teachers of God's truth.

"Anointing teaches you" – through God's Spirit we learn spiritual truths which cannot be learned by any other means (1 Cor 2:10-14). Compare Isa 54:13; Ps 25:4,5. The divine Teacher actually lives in believers – Rom 8:9,15,16.

2:28 "Remain in him" – v 24.

"Appears" – 3:2; Matt 24:30; Col 3:4; 1 Tim 6:14; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28.

"Not be ashamed" – the only way to be without shame before Him is to live in a way pleasing to Him. And this can be done only by continuing in Him – John 15:4,5.

2:29 "Righteous" – what a person is will be revealed by what he does (Matt 7:15-20). Notes on doing right at Matt 7:21; Rom 6:16-18; 8:4; etc. In fact, we might say what a person does is what he is.

"Born of Him" – John 3:3-8; Jam 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23.

3:1 "What kind of love" – 4:8-10; John 3:16; Rom 5:8; Eph 1:4; 2:4. We are worthy of nothing but hell. It was because of His great love that God took such sinners as we are and transformed them into His children.

"The Father" – note at Matt 5:16.

God. Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him. 2 Dearly loved ones, we are now the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we will be, but we know that when he appears, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

4 Whoever commits sin also breaks the Law, for sin is the breaking of the Law. 5 And you know that he was revealed to take away our sins, and in him

"Sons of God" - John 1:12,13; Rom 8:16,17; Phil 2:15; Heb 2:13; 1 Pet 1:14. Not everyone is a child of God - only those who have received the Lord Jesus and been born again by God's Spirit.

"Does not know us. . .know Him" - John 15:21; 16:3. Because believers are new people, born again, and "in Christ" the world does not know them any better than it knows Christ. They are not of the world just as Christ is not of the world (John 17:14,16). The world cannot understand their nature, their motives, their faith or anything that God has put in their hearts.

3:2 "What we will be" - God has not given a full revelation of what it will mean in eternity to be God's children.

"When he appears" - 2:28.

"We will be like Him" - see Rom 8:29. This is the highest conceivable goal for any human being. When believers see Him they will be changed into His likeness forever (1 Cor 15:48-54).

"We will see him as he is" - Matt 5:8; 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4.

3:3 Those who hope to become like Christ when He comes will want to be like Him now. The process of becoming like Him has already begun (2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:9,10), and real believers will cooperate with God in this work of purification. Compare Heb 12:14.

"Purifies" - 1:7,9; 2 Cor 7:1. We can only purify ourselves by walking in the light.

3:4 Sin is setting up one's own will against God and against God's revelation of right and wrong. It is to act as if there were no law of God, no principle of righteousness in the universe. It is to be taken up fully with one's own selfish desires.

3:5 "To take away our sins" - John 1:29; Rom 11:27; Heb 9:28; 10:11-14,17.

"In him is no sin" - Heb 4:15; 7:26. This can be said only of the Lord Jesus Christ. John has already pointed out that believers must not say it of themselves - 1:8.

3:6 Everyone is either in sin or in Christ. Those in sin practice sin as a way of life. Those in Christ cannot do this. They have been born again (2:29). They are the children of the righteous God and therefore have a righteous nature (3:1). God's Spirit lives in them (4:13). It is impossible for them to continue as they were before (Eph 2:1-3). Believers sometimes fall into sin (1:7; 2:1; 5:16; etc), but they do not, cannot knowingly continue to sin as a way of life (Prov 24:16). If they sin, their new

is no sin. 6 Whoever remains in him does not go on sinning. Whoever goes on sinning has not seen him, and has not known him.

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 8 He who commits sin is of the devil. For the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever is born of God does not go on sinning, for his seed

nature revolts against sin and causes them to reject it and strive to get out of it. And Christ is praying that they will get out of it. And the Holy Spirit in them (Luke 22:31,32; John 17:17; Heb 7:25) convicts them and urges them to get out of it.

If people who profess to be Christians remain in sin and practice it as a way of life, this shows they were not Christ's sheep, not born of God. Compare 2 Pet 2:22. The children of God are totally different from the children of the devil and this will be seen in their behavior.

"Does not go on sinning" - the Greek word is in the present tense and may be translated like this, and this certainly states the truth accurately. Or it could be translated "continue to sin" or perhaps "practice sinning." The translation "does not sin" may suggest that a believer never, ever sins. But John (just as other apostles) has already shown that this is not true - 1:9; 2:1.

3:7,8 "Let no one deceive you" - 2:26; 1 Cor 6:9; Gal 6:7; Eph 5:6. There are only two ways of life open to people - the way of sin and the way of righteousness. Every one is either in the one way or in the other (compare Matt 7:13,14; Rom 2:6-10). This does not mean that a righteous person never sins (1:7,9; 2:1; Jam 3:2; etc), or that a sinner never does a righteous act. John is speaking of the whole course of a person's life. In the life of a righteous person doing right will predominate. In the life of a sinner doing wrong will predominate.

"Righteous" - 2:29.

"Devil" - Matt 4:1; Eph 2:2. Every person is either of God or of Satan (v 10). See John 8:44. If God does not rule our lives, the devil will.

"Beginning" - Satan was the original sinner.

"Destroy the works of the devil" - the devil's work is sin and death. Christ came to destroy these in His people. By dying for their sins and rising again He laid the foundation for this destruction, and for the destruction of the devil too.

3:9 "Born of God" - 2:29,3

"Does not go on practicing sin" - v 6.

"His seed" - God's seed, spiritual seed that gives spiritual life (1 Cor 9:11). This seed is the Word of God (Jam 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23; Matt 13:3,23; Luke 8:15). It is sown in the hearts of people; it germinates and produces a new nature.

"Remains in him" - believers need not

remains in him and he cannot go on sinning, because he is born of God. 10 In this the children of God are revealed, and the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, neither *is* he who does not love his brother.

11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12 *and* not *be* like Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil, and his brother's *were* righteous.

13 Do not be surprised, my brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.

fear that God's seed in them will die or be taken away by Satan. It will remain, and God will continue the work He has begun (Phil 1:6; 2:13).

"Cannot go on sinning" – continuance in sin is altogether contrary to the believer's new nature received from God. This new nature cannot sin at all (Eph 4:24), and will join with God's Spirit in the fight against sin and the sinful nature in believers (Gal 5:17,18,24).

3:10 John is saying every person is either a child of God or a child of Satan (John 8:44; Matt 13:38), and we can tell what an individual is by what he does or does not do (Matt 7:15-20).

"Practice righteousness" – doing what is right is doing what the Bible teaches, not what people may think is right (compare John 16:2). Those who do not do right are doing wrong, through they may not always realize this. And if they do not practice doing right they are Satan's children, not God's.

"Love his brother" – this is one of the right things Jesus commanded. "Brother" has a broad meaning – including a fellow believer and brother by blood (as in v 12).

3:11 John 13:34; 15:12,17.

3:12 "Cain" – Gen 4:1-8; Heb 11:4; Jude 11. Cain belonged to the "the wicked one", Satan (v 10). Abel was a child of God who did what God told him (Heb 11:4).

3:13 John 15:18-21. Cain is one example of the people of the world hating the people of God.

3:14 "Passed from death to life" – see John 5:24. What is the great evidence seen in those who have experienced this? Love of fellow believers. Compare v 19; 2:3.

"Death" – spiritual death (Eph 2:1). Having a heart that does not love is the great evidence of this. God who is love lives in the hearts of all believers, and He causes them to love.

3:15 Hate is like murder because if it could it would destroy the person it hates. God looks at the state of the heart as well as the acts of a person. Compare Matt 5:27-30.

"Murderer" – a murderer could receive eternal life if he repented and trusted Christ. Then he would stop being a hater, and the murder he had committed would be forgiven.

He who does not love *his* brother remains in death.

15 Whoever goes on hating *his* brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life dwelling in him.

16 By this we know the love *of God*: because he laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's good things, and sees his brother in need and shuts up his heart toward him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. 20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater

3:16 "By this we know" – John shows what love is by pointing us to one who is love incarnate, and speaking of what love caused Him to do. See Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20; John 3:16; 10:11,15. Believers should be willing even to die for fellow believers. This is the standard of love God shows and teaches us. How sad it is that many who think of themselves as good Christian people will hardly lift a finger to help another Christian. How sad, and also how dangerous, as the next verses show.

3:17,18 Compare Jam 2:14-17. Without deeds faith is dead. We can say the same about love. Love that does not practice good deeds is not love at all. So-called love that does not help others is a false, deceptive and useless thing. When Christ comes to judge the nations the basis of His judgment will be what people have and have not done, not the fine words they may have uttered, or the fine emotions they may think they have felt. See Matt 25:31-46 (vs 41-46 are especially meaningful in the light of John's words here). Of course those who have real love do not help others with a view of getting some benefit for themselves (such help is only disguised selfishness). They help those in need simply because they need help. Note and references on giving at 2 Cor 9:15.

3:19 Verse 14. If we know we love fellow believers because we have proved our love in helping them, this gives us knowledge that we are rightly related to God's truth. And we have rest in God's presence. Perhaps one reason some Christians lack assurance of salvation lies in this: They have not proved their love in action, in kind and helpful deeds.

3:20 "Condemns us" – sometimes the hearts of believers condemn them. This may be because they have sinned (1:9; 2:1); or perhaps because they are reminded how little their love is, how scarce the fruit of the Spirit in their lives, or how they have failed to do what they should have done. But if we love and have shown our love in action we can have rest in God's presence.

"God. . . knows" – He is the great one and knows all about our weakness, failures, and sinfulness, and still receives us as His

than our heart, and knows all things.

21 Dearly loved ones, if our heart does not condemn us, *then* we have confidence toward God. 22 And whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he commanded us. 24 And he who keeps his commandments remains in him, and he in him. And by this we know that he remains in us, by the Spirit which he has given to us.

4 Dearly loved ones, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into

dear children, and leads us on to higher things. Compare Ps 103:8-14.

3:21 "If our heart does not condemn us" – when we are full of love and good works, and victorious over sin, our hearts and consciences will not accuse us.

"Confidence" – this is not the confidence of self-righteousness but the confidence that God is in us and working in us.

3:22 John 14:13-15; 15:7.

"Those things. . .pleasing in his sight" – we have no right to expect God to answer our prayers if we will not obey Him or try to please Him. He will not reward our disobedience and self-centeredness by giving us the blessings of answered prayer. The things which please God are things produced by faith and love, the acts of faith through love (Gal 5:6; Heb 11:6).

3:23 "Name" – John 1:12.

3:24 John 14:20-23; 17:21-23.

"Know" – vs 14,19; 2:5; 4:13.

"By the Spirit" – the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,17). The Spirit gives believers the knowledge that they are the children of God – Rom 8:15,16.

"Has given us" – 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13,14.

4:1-6 In these verses John gives two tests which enable us to know whether people are following God's truth or not. Verses 2,3 gives the first one, v 6 the second.

4:1 "Do not believe every spirit" – God's Spirit is in the world, but so are evil spirits. These evil spirits influence men to teach false doctrines, and may also speak through them. See 2 Cor 11:14,15; 1 Tim 4:1-3. So we must not believe every person who claims to teach the truth, or every spirit which speaks through men.

"False prophets" – 2:18; 2 Pet 2:1. Observe the word "many."

4:2,3 See 2:22.

"Flesh" – John 1:14; Heb 2:14. To deny this is to deny the incarnation, the virgin birth, the union of God's nature and human nature in Christ – all clear Bible truths.

"Does not confess" – they do not openly say that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. They do not preach the truth expressed in

the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. This is that *spirit* of antichrist, about which you have heard that it would come. And even now it is already in the world.

4 You are of 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 of the world, so they speak of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are of God. He who knows God listens to us, *but* he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

7 Dearly loved ones, let us love one another;

John 1:14. They may not openly deny it either. But by their failure to acknowledge it they show they do not believe it. Deceivers and false teachers can be recognized by what they do not say as well as by what they do say.

"Already in the world" – compare 2 Thess 2:7.

4:4 "Have overcome them" – 2:13; 5:4. Believers are God's chosen ones; their new spiritual life has come from God. They are able to discern false teachers and reject their teachings.

"He who is in you" – the Spirit of Christ (3:24; Rom 8:9,10).

"He who is in the world" – Satan. God's Spirit is far greater than this evil spirit. Therefore believers can overcome Satan (Jam 4:7; Eph 6:10-13).

4:5 "They" – false teachers.

"World" – 2:15,16. False prophets teach what unsaved, unspiritual people want to hear, so they are accepted (2 Tim 4:3).

4:6 Here is a very important test.

"We" – John means true teachers of God's Word, those whom God has sent. Real believers (those who know God) listen to them, recognize them as men of God and obey their teaching (compare Acts 2:42). Believers recognize teachers of God's truth, and the teachers recognize God's children. The test and proof have to do with God's revelation of the truth. Those who will not receive the teaching of Christ's gospel as recorded in the Bible are not of God, no matter what they may think.

4:7-21 These verses reveal what love is. The words love, loves, and loved, noun and verb, appear 24 times in these verses. John's point is this: God is love and has proved His love toward us in action, therefore we must love and prove our love toward others in action (3:18).

4:7,8 "Let us love" – John 13:34. Real love has its source in God, and because believers are born of God they should be like God in loving. The love he speaks of here is divine love (agape; see note at 1 Cor:13:1). It is the love God has and which He imparts to those who believe in Christ (John 17:26).

for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was revealed toward us: God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Love is *seen* in this: Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

11 Dearly loved ones, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 12 No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is made perfect in us.

13 By this we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the

No one else in the world has it. This love is not at all the same as the natural affection the people of the world may feel for friends, and families. It has nothing to do with sexual love. It is unselfish love, love that wants to serve and bring blessings to others, love that seeks the spiritual good of others. It is best seen in God's sending His Son to die for us (v 9; Rom 5:8). The surest evidence that people have been born again and know God is that they have God's love in their hearts. If people have it, it will appear in what they do.

"He who does not love does not know God" - people may pride themselves on their enlightenment and knowledge of God, but if they do not have God's love, they are deceiving themselves. They may have all sorts of mystical experiences and self-satisfying emotions, but if these do not cause them to love believers in Christ those things are false and useless and deceptive.

"God is love" - also v 16. This is God's essence, His nature. He cannot but love.

4:9,10 John 3:16; Rom 5:8; Eph 2:4,5. God is the source of divine love, not man. We would never know what divine love is if God did not show us. We would never love Him if He had not loved us and given His love in our hearts (v 19).

"Propitiation" - see the note on 2:2.

4:11 Believers ought to love one another because of what God is and what they are.

4:12 "No man has seen God" - John 1:18; 1Tim 6:16.

"God dwells in us" - John 14:23; Rom 8:9. This is true only of believers in Christ (Eph 2:12; 4:18). And the proof that it is true of them is the fact that they have love for each other. If God is in us, love is in us, and if God's love (agape) is in us, God is in us.

"Love. . . made perfect" - it is through the love of God's people for one another that God's love is fulfilled on earth.

4:13 See 3:24; John 17:21-23.

4:14 See 1:1,2.

"Saviour of the world"-2:2; John 4:42; 1 Tim 4:10.

4:15 "Confesses" - see 1:9 where the same word appears. Confessing Jesus is God's Son means that we believe Him and what He

Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.

17 Our love is made perfect in this: That we can have boldness in the day of judgment, because in this world we are just as he is. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear is *linked with* torment. He who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love him, because he first loved us.

20 If a man says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his

said, and we say so. We know He is the Son of God only because He revealed it to us. And this faith brings us to God and joins our life with His.

"The Son of God" - not a son of God. Notes at Matt 3:17; John 3:16; 5:18-23.

4:16 We know God's love not merely because He says He loves us, but because He proved His love in the most wonderful way possible (v 9; 3:16). Since God has given us absolutely convincing proof of His love we must never doubt that He loves us. No matter what difficulties, troubles or suffering come to us, or to those we love, we can count on God's love. It will never fail, never leave us (Ps 23:6; Rom 8:35-39; 1 Cor 13:8).

4:17 "Perfect" - v 12.

"Boldness" - 3:19,21; 2:28.

"Day of judgment" - Matt 10:15; 11:22,24; 12:36; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Pet 2:9; 3:7.

"We are just as he is" - as Christ is - John 17:14. God will judge believers as His children, as those who have His life and His love in them.

4:18 Do thoughts of the day of judgment bring fear to our hearts? Then we are not loving as we should.

"Perfect love" - this means love that is complete and fully developed. We see it in the life of Christ and we should know this love and have it in our lives (compare Eph 3:16-19). When we have it we will not fear even the judgment of God. See 2 Cor 5:6-9; Phil 1:21,23; 2 Tim 4:7,8.

"Drives out fear" - John is not speaking of the fear of God, that reverential respect and awe which is very important to the spiritual life of believers (notes at Gen 20:11; Job 28:28; Ps 34:11-14; 86:11; 111:10; Prov 1:7). John here means fear of punishment, fear of meeting God face to face in judgment.

4:19 Verse 10. God has shown us what real love is, and through His love has made us His children and put His love in us. Compare Rom 5:5.

4:20 See 2:9; 3:14,15. People may imagine they can love God without loving other people, but this is quite impossible. If we love God it is only because God has put this love in us, and this divine love in us

brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And we have this commandment from him: He who loves God must love his brother also.

5 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves him who did the begetting loves him also who is begotten by him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is love for God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not grievous.

4 For whoever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the

will cause us to love people just as surely as we love God. Real love for God and for people cannot be separated.

4:21 What is a spiritual necessity, God commands us to put in practice. He is speaking of love shown in action (3:16-18).

5:1 "Jesus is the Christ" - 2:22; 3:23; 4:2. To believe Jesus is the Christ is to accept God's revelation about Jesus and to trust that truth. A real belief that Jesus is the Christ is a gift of God (Phil 1:29; Eph 2:8,9). It has a profound effect on anyone who has it (compare Acts 2:36-42). Of course, merely to say we believe that Jesus is the Christ without really believing it will have no good effect whatever.

"Born of God" - 2:29; John 1:12,13.

"Loves him also who" - if we love God we will love all those who are born of God (4:20).

5:2 "Know" - can we not know we love God's people because we have good feelings toward them and want to help them? This is not proof of love if we do not show our love to God by obedience to His Word. Love and obedience go together. If we know we love God because we heartily obey His commands, we can be sure we love God's children.

5:3 John 17:15,21,23.

"Grievous" - or "burdensome" - a principal meaning of the Greek word. Compare Matt 11:29,30.

5:4 God's commands are not burdensome to believers because they have a new nature which loves God, and God Himself lives in them (4:12).

"Whoever" - everyone without exception.

"Overcomes the world" - compare 2:13,14; 4:4. Believers began to overcome the world by leaving the ways and sins of the world and coming by faith to Christ. The moment they did this they had overcome the world, and they continue to overcome it by continuing to believe in Christ. God has called them out of the world and separated them to be His special people (John 17:6,14,16). Faith is victory over the world because it binds us to Christ who is the great Victor over the world (John 16:33).

5:5 See 4:15.

"But the one who believes" - people may

world: our faith. 5 Who is *the one* who overcomes the world, but *the one* who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 This is *the one* who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is truth.

7 For there are three who testify in heaven: The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.

8 And there are three that testify on earth: The Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree as one.

9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God which he has given concerning

try to overcome the world by ascetic practices or by withdrawing from the world. This is not overcoming the world but running from it. This will not work. Those who try this method take the world along with them in their hearts, and what they are doing is actually a part of the world they hope to overcome. Note on overcoming at Rev 2:7.

5:6 Matt 3:13-17; 26:28; John 19:34. In the Bible water is sometimes a symbol of spiritual life and God's Spirit (John 4:10,14; 7:38,39). Blood speaks of sacrifice for sin, the basis of forgiveness and cleansing (1:7; Eph 1:7). Christ was born of God's Spirit, anointed by the Spirit, was full of spiritual life, and became the source of spiritual life to others. And He finished His earthly life by laying it down as a sacrifice for our sins.

"Spirit who testifies" - John 15:26; 16:13-15. God's Spirit continues to do this everywhere throughout this age.

"The Spirit is truth" - John 14:6,17; Ps 31:5; Titus 1:2.

5:7,8 A part of these verses - "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth" are missing from all the earliest Greek manuscripts now available, but are found in a famous Latin translation of the Greek. Erasmus, a Greek scholar of the 16th century, included them in the Greek text he published and so they came into the King James Version of the Bible. It is not impossible that they were in the original Greek manuscript, unlikely as nearly all authorities on the subject think this is. However that might be, the truth these words teach is seen everywhere in the New Testament. See notes at Matt 3:16,17; etc.

5:8 The facts of the life and death of Christ are written down and are like witnesses. God's Spirit speaks to us of them also. All three are in perfect agreement. The inner witness says the same thing as the outer. The believer's experience and the Bible agree.

5:9 "The testimony of men" - compare John 8:17. We believe many things because men say them. Should we not then believe a far greater testimony, that of God Himself? The

his Son. 10 He who believes on the Son of God has *this* testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he does not believe the record that God gave about his Son. 11 And this is the record: God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 I have written these things to you who believe on the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.

water, the blood and the Spirit (vs 6,8) are God's witness to Christ. Two of them are recorded in the Gospels; God's Spirit testifies both in the words of the Bible (which He inspired) and to our minds and hearts.

"The testimony of God" - compare John 5:36,37; 8:18. We have this testimony in the New Testament. Indeed, we can say that the whole Bible is God's testimony to Christ.

5:10 When we trust in Christ we obtain an inner conviction that the written record about Him is true. This is produced by God's Spirit.

"Liar" - 1:10. Not to believe what God says is a grave insult and dishonor to Him. **5:11** "Eternal life" - John 3:16,36; 6:47; 17:2.

"In His Son" - v 20; 1:2; John 11:25,26; 14:6; Col 3:4.

5:12 Eternal life, spiritual life is obtainable only in one person - Jesus the Son of God. If we do not have Him in us we are spiritually dead (Eph 4:18). And we will not be able to obtain spiritual life from God in some other way (John 3:36). How can we expect to receive it if we reject the one and only source of it?

"Has"-believers have eternal life as a present possession (John 3:36; 5:24).

5:13 God does not want believers in Christ to be doubtful about their salvation. They have eternal life, and they should know that they have it. This is one reason why God inspired John to write this letter. How can believers be sure they are saved? What is the evidence, what are the signs John points to? Assurance of salvation comes from the following:

By believing the testimony of God in His Word (v 9,11)

By the inner testimony of God's Spirit (v 10; 3:24)

By relying on the promise of the forgiveness of sins (1:7-9)

By the evidence of obedience to God (2:5; 5:2)

By the evidence of right living (2:29; 3:6,10)

By the evidence of the fruit of love in our lives (3:14,18,19; 4:12).

John also gives us statements of truth which assure believers (4:15; 5:1). Full assurance of salvation is based on three

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him: If we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have made to him.

16 If any man sees his brother commit a sin *which is* not to death, he should pray, and he will give him life for those whose sin is not to death. There is a sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray concerning it. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin that is not to death.

18 We know that whoever is born of God does not go on sinning, but he who was born of God

things -

The written Word of God

The inner experience of believers

The outer evidence of the way they live and love.

5:14,15 Because believers have eternal life they can have confidence in coming into God's presence (compare Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12; Heb 4:16; 10:19-22). Our confidence is this: God will answer all prayers if they are according to His will, and He will give us what we ask for. Asking God according to our own will is a different matter. We should not expect Him to answer such prayers. Matt 6:10 gives what should always be the chief concern of every believer. But how do we know what God's will is? The whole Bible reveals it. If we are ignorant of the Bible we will not know God's will. But if we study it we can see what He wants to give us in answer to our believing prayer (compare Jam 1:6,7).

5:16 Praying for others who sin is a duty of believers. Compare Jam 5:16.

"Sin which is not to death" - why does some sin not lead to death? Because God can forgive it, and will forgive it when confessed (1:9). What is the sin that is "to death"? Since John did not explain it we should not speak too dogmatically about it. The probable meaning seems to be this: a sin which God will not forgive. See Matt 12:31,32; Heb 2:3; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:25. Those who knowingly, willfully, deliberately reject Christ and His gospel and go on doing so make it impossible for God to forgive them. John does not say that believers can commit this sin. Indeed, 3:6,9 teaches that they cannot.

5:17 See 3:4. The fact that there is sin which does not lead to death should not encourage us to sin, but should give us hope of forgiveness if we sin.

5:18 "Does not go on sinning" - 3:6. Many translators of this verse believe that "whoever is born of God" refers to any believer, and "he who was born of God" refers to the Lord Jesus. His physical birth of a virgin was by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:35; Gal 4:4). His resurrection from the dead was like a birth (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5). And the life He had from eternity was from God (John 5:26).

keeps him, and that wicked one does not hold him.

19 *And* we know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies prostrate in wickedness.

20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, so that we

"Keeps him" - that is, Christ keeps the believer (John 10:28; Rom 5:9,10).

"That wicked one" - Satan.

"Does not hold him" - or "does not touch him" (KJV); the same verb is translated "do not cling to me" in John 20:17. Satan cannot keep his hands on believers, cannot hold them in his power. Christ is in them and He is greater than Satan (4:4). What John says here is true of all who have been born again, not of just a few exceptional saints.

5:19 "Know" - see in this letter the things John says believers "know" - 2:5,20; 3:2,5,14, 16,19,24; 4:16; 5:13,15,18,20.

"In wickedness" - 2:16. Or the Greek could be translated "in the wicked one." See John 14:30; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; 2 Tim 2:26. This is why the world is the ungodly place it is.

5:20 "Given us an understanding" -

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.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

compare Luke 24:45; 1 Cor 2:12,16.

"That we may know Him" - Matt 11:27. This is the only way to a true knowledge of God.

"In Him" - John 17:21-23; 1 Cor 12:12,13; Eph 1:3,4. The world is "in" the wicked one; believers are "in" Christ. The words "true God" refer to Christ. See references at Phil 2:6; Luke 2:11. He is also eternal life (v 11; John 11:25; 14:6). Only of God could it be said that He is eternal life.

5:21 "Idols" - he has spoken of the true God, and this has brought to his mind the thought of false gods. All that men worship or serve which is not the true God is an idol. An idol may be a physical object or it may be a false idea of what God is like. Let us guard ourselves against any kind of idolatry.