

Lessons of Salvation
from the
Epistle of 1 John

Lessons and Warnings

David Wilson

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Table of Contents

Chapter One

Lesson One: 1 John 1:1–7	5
Lesson Two: 1 John 1:8–10	19

Chapter Two

Lesson Three: 1 John 2:1–3	32
Lesson Four: 1 John 2:4–11	42
Lesson Five: 1 John 2:12–17	55
Lesson Six: 1 John 2:18–29	67

Chapter Three

Lesson Seven: 1 John 3:1–10	77
Lesson Eight: 1 John 3:11–24	86

Chapter Four

Lesson Nine: 1 John 4:1–6	97
Lesson Ten: 1 John 4:7–21	107

Chapter Five

Lesson Eleven: 1 John 5:1–13	120
Lesson Twelve: 1 John 5:14–21	131

Chapter One

Lesson One: 1 John 1:1-7

1 John 1:1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

[We are writing] about the Word of Life [in] Him Who existed from the beginning, Whom we have heard, Whom we have seen with our [own] eyes, Whom we have gazed upon [for ourselves] and have touched with our [own] hands. (1 John 1:1 AMP)

“That which was from the beginning”

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. (Revelation 22:13)

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning [the origin] of the creation of God. (Revelation 3:14)

The Word was the Lord Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. John walked and talked with Christ until his heart was knit with that of his Lord, and the burden of his ministry was to share that experience with others.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

In these last days, God has multiplied the Bible, the Word, the divine expression—by tens of millions of copies and in hundreds of languages. Now we, by faith and through the study of the Bible, guided by the Spirit, may hear and see and look upon and handle the Word of life, through the Holy Scriptures. There we see the Father and the Son, for the Bible is the divine revelation and voice of God; it is His word to mankind.

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (John 14:22–23)

In the epistle of 1 John, we find the spirit and teachings of the Master. Through prayer and the surrender of our hearts to the Word, we, like John, can know, see, and touch the Word of life. Through the word of God received into the heart by faith, and by the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, Jesus becomes to us an ever-present Savior and friend.

1 John 1:2. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

“Shew unto you that eternal life”

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:21)

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

1 John Chapter 1

For John to show us eternal life is for him to show us Christ, for eternal life is found only in Him. (See 1 John 5:11–12.) The epistle of 1 John is a revelation of the love and character of Jesus. As John saw the physical Christ manifested in the flesh, so we through John's witness in his epistle can see Jesus revealed to us. Will we accept this revelation by faith, and through the study of the Word? If we do, we can have intimate fellowship with our Savior and know eternal life.

1 John 1:3. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

“Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son”

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 3:8–9)

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:9)

The continual theme of John's testimony is that he saw, heard, looked upon, and handled the Word of life, Jesus, the Savior of men. It is our privilege, with John, to have fellowship, or companionship, with Jesus. The apostle Paul called this experience “the fellowship of the mystery” (Ephesians 3:9). And it is indeed a mystery how a sinner estranged from God can be brought into harmony and peace with Him, through love that transforms us. Yet this mystery can be experienced. However, it will not come through churches or religion; it is a personal experience.

The purpose of the gospel is restoration to fellowship with God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. John is writ-

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

ing not only to those whom he addressed two thousand years ago; his epistle speaks to us as well.

Further, the purpose of this letter is that we might come into fellowship with Jesus. This epistle is intended to encourage and develop fellowship and “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). The desire of John is that you and I might experience this union and fellowship. That is also the desire of Christ and the Father. Will it also be your desire? I hope and pray it will be.

1 John 1:4. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

“That your joy may be full”

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Romans 15:13)

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Psalm 16:11)

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:10–11)

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8–9)

The whole world is seeking joy in one form or another. It matters not the religion or culture or ethnicity; mankind wants to have happiness in life. Yet the happiness we desire is often not found, or if it is, it is only temporary. True joy cannot be found in sensual

1 John Chapter 1

indulgence or entertainment and the frivolity of life. Yet full and meaningful joy is what God wants us to have, and through the epistle of 1 John, He is telling us the source of that joy. The purpose of John's introduction is that the reader may experience fullness of joy. Further, John declares that this joy and freedom is found only in fellowship with Christ. It is God's purpose and John's hope that we can testify, "I have seen and touched the Word of life." This invitation to experience the joy and fellowship of the Lord is being offered to you, dear reader. Will you accept the invitation and know the joy of salvation?

Sadly, many in the world and even in the church neglect the true source of joy and seek for it in education, popularity, possessions, and many other things. However, the joy to be gained from these things is only temporary and at best will only last a lifetime. In contrast, the joy that God is offering us, when we have faith and know the power of salvation, will fill our hearts now and for eternity.

1 John 1:5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

In our day, and indeed throughout time, many have claimed to speak for God, to have a new revelation, a new religion. How can we know that John's voice is true, that his testimony can be safely followed? Throughout this epistle John teaches what Jesus taught. Further, John, as a prophet and teacher, is subject to the prophets and teachers who went before him. Thus, as we go to "the law and the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20), we can see that all that John has said is confirmed in the Bible. Therefore, John's testimony is not his own, but proceeds from Him who is from the beginning. It is present and vital truth, spoken to believers long ago and to us as well in the twenty-first century.

"God is light"

He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.
(Daniel 2:22)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. (Psalm 36:9)

O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. (Psalm 43:3)

God is light and He is the source and sustainer of all life. In His very nature is the source of all goodness and truth. In Him is the perfection of justice and mercy, and all the wisdom and knowledge of eternity. This brief description of the nature and character of God in 1 John 1:5 is also an invitation to know and trust Him as your Father and friend, your Lord and your God.

“No darkness at all”

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

The just Lord is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity. (Zephaniah 3:5)

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity. (Habakkuk 1:13)

The promise and all-important message John desires to share with us is that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. In God there is no sin or deception. Rather, it is the nature of sin and Satan to hide things and to make the truth and revelation of God mysterious and hard to understand. It is the work of darkness to hide behind the cloak of deception. Satan brings the darkness of sin, and its attendant heartache and sorrow. Satan also brings perversions

1 John Chapter 1

and misunderstandings regarding the love of God. In addition, he seeks to attribute all the darkness of this world to God. However, God is only light and truth, wisdom and happiness. Darkness in all its forms cannot abide with Him. Even the darkness of night shall flee from Him. We read of the New Jerusalem that “the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Revelation 21:23).

The word *darkness* often represents obscurity or anything that is difficult to penetrate or understand. Sin, evil, and error that lead away from the true knowledge of God is also represented as darkness, and is the basis of much of man’s religion and so-called spirituality, for we read, “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

All the false religions and philosophies of men lead us, to one degree or another, into the darkness of sin and error and separation from God. Though it is difficult for man to understand God, He has revealed Himself to us through the Holy Bible. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). However, the clearest revelation of God was in Christ, for “in Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Mankind need not live in the darkness of misapprehension or ignorance of God, for He has declared, “I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:7).

To penetrate our sin-darkened minds and bring us into “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4) is God’s intention for us. This is why He has placed in every man a measure of faith. (See Romans 12:3.) As darkened as our minds are because of sin, if we choose to respond to the light of God’s love, mercy, and truth, we can be delivered from the darkness “into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

However, there is an enemy who wishes us to remain in darkness, and he uses the darkness of false religion and sin to fascinate and please the senses. Satan calls this darkness light, for he is “the god of this world [who] hath blinded the minds of them which

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

believe not” (2 Corinthians 4:4). To know God is to know the light of truth and righteousness. Further, God’s desire for His children is that they would live a life filled with joy and living the principles of light in a world of darkness. Indeed, this is the wonderful message and promise of John: that we need no longer live in the darkness, but may “have the light of life” (John 8:12) and experience the light, the joy, and the love of God through Christ.

1 John 1:6. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

So if we say we are his friends, but go on living in spiritual darkness and sin, we are lying. (1 John 1:6 TLB)

[So] if we say we are partakers together and enjoy fellowship with Him when we live and move and are walking about in darkness, we are [both] speaking falsely and do not live and practice the Truth [which the Gospel presents]. (1 John 1:6 AMP)

If God is our Father, then “ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (1 Thessalonians 5:5). As God is truth, with no darkness of sin or falsehood in His character, so His children will live lives of integrity and truth. Failing to do so, if we claim to know God, makes us liars.

If we are God’s children, having fellowship with Him, the light that is seen in Christ will, to a degree, be reflected in us as we walk and live by faith. Like the moon, which reflects the glory of the sun, we as God’s children are to reflect the glory of the Father. Like the moon, we have no light, no glory inherent in ourselves; it is only derived from the bright beams of the “Sun of righteousness” (Malachi 4:2). Thus, Jesus taught us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). The glory of the moon is in reality the glory of the sun reflected. The glory in the child of God is merely a reflection of the Father, for He is the true source of the

1 John Chapter 1

light and goodness we are to reflect and let shine. Therefore, when we profess to know and love God, yet we live in darkness, we lie against the truth.

What does it mean to walk in darkness?

If we do not choose to give ourselves fully to God, we remain to one degree or another under the influence of the darkness of error and sin.

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. (Colossians 1:13)

Walking in darkness is living under the power or control of Satan's kingdom. This is made evident as we follow his will and live by his dictates and principles. To be under the power of darkness is to live contrary to the light of God's will and the principles of His Word. Through Christ, God desires to deliver us from the darkness of a life of sin and compromise.

Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned [despise, spurn] the counsel of the most High. (Psalm 107:10–11)

To walk in darkness is to reject or neglect God's Word and counsel; it is to live in transgression, to be servants of sin rather than serving Christ, regardless of our religious profession.

Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness. Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the forwardness [perversity] of the wicked. (Proverbs 2:13–14)

Walking in darkness takes place when we leave the path of integrity and purity and willfully seek the darkness of error, sin, and worldly compromise.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. (Luke 11:34)

The eye represents our perception or understanding. When we allow our perception of righteousness and truth to be blunted by sin, we are in darkness. Darkness represents evil, and evil begins in our minds when we waver in our allegiance to God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)

Ignoring and setting aside the light of truth and the gospel to pursue sin is walking in darkness. When we do this and yet claim to be Christ's followers, our profession is vain.

The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble. (Proverbs 4:19)

Following wickedness is walking in the darkness, which blunts our spiritual vision and we cannot tell that we are going in the wrong direction.

“We lie, and do not the truth”

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. (Titus 1:16)

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not

1 John Chapter 1

thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. (Romans 2:17–24)

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:21–23)

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. (James 1:22–24)

They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth,

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:39–44)

The Bible gives many examples of those claiming to know God yet not living for Him. This makes our profession of no value and grieves the heart of God. Claiming to know God and claiming we are following Christ while willfully choosing or neglecting to follow the admonition and counsel of the Bible makes us liars in God's sight. Sadly, the Scriptures reveal this will be the state of much of the church in the last days. Yet there is still hope for all who will repent and seek the Lord. Enabled by His grace, we are to choose day by day to serve and follow God and the light of His Word. There can be no salvation in profession alone. True salvation brings a change in our lifestyle, not just a profession. We are to be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:11). This is what it means to be walking in the light and having a true Christian experience.

1 John 1:7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Light, in Scripture, refers to "God, the source of knowledge; saving knowledge; the gospel."¹

"Walk in the light"

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. (Proverbs 4:18)

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. (Psalm 89:15)

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. (Isaiah 2:5)

1 John Chapter 1

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)

To walk in the light means to live in the light, which is to live for God. Living in the light is to make the Bible, the Word of light, our study and our life standard. Living in the light means to be ever pressing toward “the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Living in the light is making Christ our friend and living a life that makes Jesus both Redeemer and King. Walking in the light is knowing the love and mercy of God in the inner man and reflecting that light to the dark world around us. As we live in the light of God’s love, we will have fellowship with other believers who are light bearers.

In addition, we can remain in the light only as we know and experience “the blood [life] of Jesus Christ ... [who] cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“Cleanseth us from all sin”

Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. (Psalm 19:12)

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (Psalm 51:2)

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9–11)

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses (removes) us from all sin and guilt [keeps us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations]. (1 John 1:7 AMP)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

The blood of Christ cleanses us from guilt and condemnation, and the life of Christ empowers us to keep us from sin. As we walk in the light of God's favor and love, He leads us to a life of commitment and obedience, for that is the fruit of "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). The light is the evidence of the cleansing blood of Christ being made effectual in our lives.

On the other hand, living in darkness is evidence of separation from Christ, and His blood cannot cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin. This cleansing is not only pardon from all sin but enabling grace to overcome, as we will study in 1 John 1:9. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

The Spirit of God is inviting us, through the testimony of John, to know Him who was from the beginning. We are invited into a relationship with the Father and the Son, and this relationship is the beginning of eternal life. Eternal life cannot be found in religion. It is not inherent in the nature of man; eternal life is only in Christ. The Spirit's voice is calling to us, through the epistle of John, to have more than just a religious profession; it is calling us into the light. The invitation of heaven is the light of the knowledge of God, the light of truth known intellectually and experienced in our life. To be freed from the guilt and condemnation of sin and to know the joy of union with our Maker is the experience we are being offered in the first few verses of 1 John. Friend, will you accept this invitation and make it your own by faith? I hope and pray that you will.

Endnotes:

1. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*. (San Francisco, California: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967).

Lesson Two: 1 John 1:8–10

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

For if we take up the attitude “we have not sinned,” we flatly deny God’s diagnosis of our condition and cut ourselves off from what he has to say to us. (1 John 1:8 Phillips)

If we say we have no sin [refusing to admit that we are sinners], we delude and lead ourselves astray, and the Truth [which the Gospel presents] is not in us [does not dwell in our hearts]. (1 John 1:8 AMP)

“Say that we have no sin”

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. (Ecclesiastes 7:20)

If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near; Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; if they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee. (2 Chronicles 6:36–39)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:19, 23)

The above verses make it clear that all men are sinners. Further, the law of God holds everyone accountable, for all mankind has sinned; therefore, all are guilty. In addition, if we deny the testimony of the Word of truth, and ignore or deny the testimony of the Spirit of truth, which seeks to “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,” (John 16:8) then the truth of God cannot be in us. Refusing to acknowledge that we are sinners is saying we have no sin and thus no need of a Savior, which leaves us condemned to die and subject to the just wrath of God. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

The epistle of 1 John was written to the professed Christian community. Even among believers, there are many ways men can deny the testimony of God that we are sinners. When we lower the standard of God’s Word and put human standards in its place, we may obtain a human righteousness in which we are relatively satisfied, but we are devoid of the righteousness of Christ. This is the state of the lukewarm professor about whom Jesus warned us in Revelation. The prevalent attitude in the last days is that we are accepted by God, yet in God’s sight we are wretched, blind, and naked. (See Revelation 3:14–19.) Self-satisfaction is one of the ways in which we say to God and ourselves that we have no sin. A lack of perception places religion and profession in the place of a daily walk and heart surrender to Christ.

The book of Timothy speaks of a time when believers will depart from the faith, a time when teachers will tickle the ears of the congregations with that which is pleasing to the carnal, unregenerate heart. (See 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:3.) We have fully arrived to that time; we have substituted the religion of men, the doctrines and teachings of men, for the pure Word of God. We think we are accepted by God when in fact we are far from Him. We claim to see,

1 John Chapter 1

yet we are blind to our real spiritual condition and do not know we are yet in our sins, though claiming to be washed and cleansed.

The attitude of the true Christian must always be that of the recognition of our utter helplessness and dependence upon Christ. At no time can we substitute the law of God for the standards of men. At no time can we accept the pleasing fables of wolves in sheep's clothing for the counsel of God. And never should we be satisfied with anything less in our lives than seeking "first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

A repentant, humble attitude, striving to obey God and please Him in all things, is the mark of the true Christian experience. While the false professor is comfortable in his conformity to the world and following man-made standards and religion, thinking he is freed from his sins and having no sin to condemn him, yet he is deceived. Many believe they do more good than bad, and by virtue of this fact will be accepted by God and have eternal life. The profession of religion, belonging to a church, or being faithful to church rituals or creeds is insufficient to save anyone. Yet many cling to these and similar ideas and in essence say to God, "We have no sin" (1 John 1:8). These people delude themselves, and the truth of God is not in their life.

"We deceive ourselves"

Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? (Jeremiah 7:8-10)

Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. (Jeremiah 8:5-6)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth. (John 9:41)

Then Jesus told him, "I have come into the world to give sight to those who are spiritually blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind. If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty," Jesus replied. "But your guilt remains because you claim to know what you are doing." (John 9:39, 41 TLB)

The darkness of sin and error deceives the heart, even though we claim to be believers in the true God. Deception invariably causes us to deny our condition as sinners, to reject the call to repentance. The unrepentant soul who refuses to accept the ministry of light, which leads to confession, repentance, and restoration, is deceived, and the truth is not in him. It is Satan's special work to cause people to neglect or reject God's Word and His law while professing belief in Christ.

Every warning, reproof, and entreaty found in the Word of God, or which comes to us through His messengers, is heaven's plea to us. It is the voice of Jesus asking for entrance into our hearts. With every plea unheeded, every conviction to repent set aside, the desire to yield to Christ becomes weaker. Yet often, because we profess a belief in God and have a degree of religion, we do not realize how deceived and lost we are. Oh, what a strange infatuation has come over so many!

The impressions of the Holy Spirit and the drawing love of God upon our hearts, if ignored or set aside today, will not be as strong tomorrow. If we neglect to heed the voice of God's Spirit, over time our hearts become less impressible. Yet, deceived as we are, we still make a profession of religion and of Christ, thinking we have no sin to repent of because of religious self-satisfaction. Our confidence in our religious profession or church membership, in ritual and ceremony and creed, will not avail to cleanse us from sin. Only in recognizing our need of the grace of God can we be freed from sin's guilt and washed by Christ's blood, enabled to

1 John Chapter 1

overcome. Apart from this experience, we are deceived, in attitude if not in word, into thinking there is no sin in us, when in fact the guilt and condemnation of unrepented sin is still upon us.

“Truth is not in us”

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:4)

And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof. (Proverbs 5:12)

He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth. (Proverbs 10:17)

Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish. (Proverbs 12:1)

When we refuse to listen to the convicting voice of the Spirit of truth, when we neglect the testimony of truth from God’s Word, when we ignore the reproof and correction of the law, how can the gospel, the good news of salvation, find any place in our hearts? How can the grace of God save us if we refuse to humble ourselves, acknowledge our sinfulness, and entrust our lives to Christ alone as the means of our salvation and the basis of our righteousness before God?

In today’s religious atmosphere of feel-good religion, we are made to feel that we are acceptable with God. Yet in this feeling and atmosphere of acceptance, we are neglecting the call to discipleship and true commitment based on God’s standard as found in the Scriptures. This feel-good religion of the modern age is but another manifestation of the truth not being in the churches and in the hearts of the people, for we are left comfortable in our sins and therefore unrepentant. Far too much of modern religion leaves us deluded and we are led astray, and the truth of the gospel of grace and salvation is not in our life.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

1 John 1:9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“If we confess”

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. (Psalm 32:5)

For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. (Psalm 51:3)

In spite of our great unworthiness, we are to understand that there is One who can take away our sin and save us, sinful as we may be. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name [other than Jesus] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Every sin acknowledged and confessed God will forgive. Regardless of how bad we have been, the fact that we understand our need to some degree and recognize our sinfulness is the evidence that God is seeking to draw us to Himself so that we might be forgiven. However, if we remain in indifference or religious self-satisfaction, God cannot forgive us. Unless we repent, the execution of God’s justice is before us.

“He is faithful”

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations. (Deuteronomy 7:9)

1 John Chapter 1

But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:15)

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24)

God is trustworthy, and we can believe that He will do all that He has said. The Bible shows us how faithful God is in keeping His promises and in helping us to overcome. He is faithful and gracious, for He is ever seeking to save mankind. Our trust therefore should not be in our feelings or in ourselves, or in any religious attainment or ritual. Our trust must be in God's faithfulness to forgive us and to restore us.

“He is ... just”

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. (Deuteronomy 32:4)

There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. (Isaiah 45:21)

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. (Revelation 15:3)

God is righteous, holy, and good, and He upholds His standards and His law. “Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth”

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

(Psalm 86:15). “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before Thy face” (Psalm 89:14). Attributes of justice, righteousness, and holiness blend in the character and nature of God. So while God will hold us accountable for our sins, yet by virtue of the shed blood of Christ, the penalty has been paid. In addition, if we will yield to the Spirit of grace, confess, and acknowledge our wrongs, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins.

Humanly speaking it is not at all fair that another should bear the responsibility for our faults and sins. Yet God is not a man. It is in the sacrificial death and righteousness of Christ that God can be both merciful and just.

“To forgive us our sins”

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. (Psalm 86:5)

If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. (Psalm 130:3–4)

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:12–14)

It is God’s nature to forgive, and we can know and experience His forgiveness. Or we can refuse His offer, remaining unwilling to confess our sins, and in the end experience His justifiable wrath. The choice is ours. God is faithful in His willingness and desire to restore us to Himself and save us from sin. He is also faithful and just to uphold His law and the standards of His kingdom and give to all who choose “the wages of sin,” which “is death” (Romans 6:23). However, God’s eternal purpose is to save us, for Scripture

reveals He has “called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:9).

“To cleanse us from all unrighteousness”

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:1–3, 10)

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:25–27)

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. (Titus 3:5)

God’s purpose in forgiving us is that He may restore us. There is a power in knowing God’s forgiveness, a power that makes us love and appreciate Him who has so freely loved us, leading us to dedicate ourselves to Him. The result of experiencing God’s cleansing forgiveness is “that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Colossians 1:10–11). This is the power of forgiveness and the result of God cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

1 John 1:10. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

If we say (claim) we have not sinned, we contradict His Word and make Him out to be false and a liar, and His Word is not in us [the divine message of the Gospel is not in our hearts.] (1 John 1:10 AMP)

“If we say that we have not sinned”

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. (Romans 3:10–18)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:11–12)

In our day, much of mankind has in thought and practice adopted the belief that there are no moral absolutes and there is no personal accountability, in essence declaring in his heart, there is no sin. Yet God’s Word is clear; there is a moral accountability, and we live in a moral universe, and our hearts are wicked. In light of these facts, the gospel provides a remedy to our sinfulness and our guilt. But if we live and act contrary to God’s will and set up our own standards of accountability and right, contrary to the truth of God, we are saying to God we have not sinned.

1 John Chapter 1

Even among professed Christians today, the same attitude prevails in a Christianized version. Thus is fulfilled the prophecy, “And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach” (Isaiah 4:1). Isaiah is depicting a class of women or churches who profess Christ and take His name, but who want their own bread, or doctrines and belief system. The prophecy declares the people want to wear their own apparel, which is a righteousness obtained by meeting man-made standards, all the while wanting the name of Christian and holding on to a delusive hope of being saved in sin.

The message of 1 John speaks to two classes: those who refuse to acknowledge that they are sinners in need of God’s grace and salvation, and those who profess Christ and claim to believe in the gospel but who have created a gospel that saves them in sin. In either case, we declare by our actions that God is a liar through the refusal to repent and humble ourselves before Him as sinners.

“We make him a liar”

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)

That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:18)

He has given us both his promise and his oath, two things we can completely count on, for it is impossible for God to tell a lie. Now all those who flee to him to save them can take new courage when they hear such assurances from God; now they can know without doubt that he will give them the salvation he has promised them. (Hebrews 6:18 TLB)

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (1 John 5:10)

God cannot lie; He has said we are sinners in need of redemption. Further, He has stated that He is able and willing to save. However, if we have not sinned according to our thinking, what need is there of a Savior? This conclusion calls into question the integrity and truthfulness of God, for He knows us better than we know ourselves. God's testimony is that the human "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Are you going to trust to your own feelings, thinking you have no need of a Savior? To trust in our own thoughts and feelings and hopes is dangerous. Better to trust in Him who knows what is in the heart of man, for God remains faithful and just to save us.

"His word is not in us"

God has clearly declared our condition, yet many in the world today refuse to recognize that they are sinners. Still others have become confused as to what sin is, and do not comprehend its seriousness in the sight of God. Satan's purpose is to keep people from understanding this simple but important truth that we are sinners in need of God's grace and salvation. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isaiah 5:20–21).

When we have made the substitution of light for darkness, truth for error, the father of lies has us in his control. We have refused to love the truth, while at the same time loving unrighteousness; therefore, we come under strong delusion to believe the lie. The lie comes in several forms. Some believe we can be saved in our sins; others believe there is no sin and no God and nothing to be saved from. Others believe that if they have lived a relatively good life by human standards, they will get to heaven by their own

1 John Chapter 1

obtainments of goodness, without a total trust in the merits of a Savior. In all these ways and more, we declare that God is a liar and we know better than He does, and truly the testimony of His Word has no place in our hearts. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12.)

Chapter Two

Lesson Three: 1 John 2:1–3

1 **John 2:1.** My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

“My little children”

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Ephesians 1:3–7)

The apostle John and the other disciples often address their converts as little children, a term of endearment. Throughout the Scriptures, God addresses those who claim to follow Him as His children. This is an invitation to know God as Father and an invitation to an intimacy and closeness that we expect in families.

We become God’s children only by adoption, for naturally we are all estranged and separated from Him. When a couple decides to adopt a child there is work and effort involved, and often money to be paid. For God to make us His adopted children it cost heart-

1 John Chapter 2

ache, suffering, and eventually the death of Christ on the cross. It does not end there, for God goes in search of the child in need of love and care, as all adoptive parents do. God through His Spirit seeks to draw all men that they may become children of God by faith. No one can become a true child of God on his own, any more than a child can be adopted by his own efforts. A couple must go in search of the child to adopt, and so it is with God. This is done because of His love. As adopted children we are to recognize the cost of our redemption. When we do, love for God awakens in our hearts, and over time we take on the attributes of our Father as our characters are transformed and renewed.

How are God's children to act? What are their characteristics?

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:14–17)

Only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory. (Romans 8:17 AMP)

Those who are truly God's children are led by the Spirit. Further, as God leads us, an increasing love and earnestness develops in us, which causes our souls to cry out, "Abba Father." Just as the infant appreciates and understands more of the love of his parents as it grows, and therefore loves in return, so our affection for God and subsequent obedience to Him will grow and deepen. This growing relationship of love leads to discipleship and a willingness to suffer for our Father. We seek to live by His principles, which will often put us out of harmony with the world around us. This willingness to suffer for Christ because we live His law and His Word shows that we are truly children of God.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9–13)

Jesus, in giving us this example of the attitude and focus of our prayers, is also showing us the attitude and experience of God's children. In the child of God there is love and reverence for God and dependence upon Him for the spiritual and physical things of life. This is no casual off-and-on relationship, but one of commitment and love as we seek to live out God's will.

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 5:5–8)

God is light; therefore, as His children, we must be living in the light of God, obedient to His commandments and principles. This leads to sound and sober thinking and acting, following the leading of God. To be children of light means to have the grace of faith and love, with an earnest longing and hopeful expectation for salvation and its end, eternal life. The experience of the children of light leads away from the moral darkness of this world.

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking,

1 John Chapter 2

nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. (Ephesians 5:1–8)

These verses in Ephesians clearly show who are God's children and who are not. God's children follow Him. They seek to please and obey Him. This is the result of faith and love. This is what they increasingly desire and long for. However, there are others who claim to be children of God yet are deceived, for they are living in sin and are children of disobedience, not children of God.

We live in a day when the acceptance of sin by believer and unbeliever alike is commonly lived, thought, and acted out. However, this is not the way of the child of God. The child of God, though once in darkness like others, is now "light in the Lord"; therefore, they walk "as children of light," partakers of the righteousness of Christ, who forgives and enables us to live out the principles of the light of heaven in our lives, separating us from the darkness of sin and unbelief.

Throughout the epistle of 1 John, believers are addressed as children, sons and daughters of God. What a blessed privilege to have God as our Father! However, with that relationship come the privileges and responsibilities of being family members. We are His children, and like all children, we are destined to mature and grow up.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4:13–15)

“That ye sin not”

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:14–16)

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. (Jude 24)

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Peter 1:4)

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20–21)

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. (Titus 2:11–12)

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. (Romans 6:22)

1 John Chapter 2

The influence of the grace of Christ in the soul brings about the converted heart and creates within us enmity against Satan and sin. Without the converting grace and renewing power of Christ in our lives, we would continue to be the captive servants of Satan, ever ready to follow his will and suggestions, thinking we are following our own will and ideas. The power of redeeming grace, which Christ imparts, enables us to resist the tyrant and usurper. Whoever in heart and life begins to separate from sin instead of loving it, whoever resists and conquers the sinful passions that have controlled the life, demonstrates the work of grace, a power wholly from God. Therefore, John declares to us God's standard for His children, which is that they "sin not."

As God's children, we will not want to purposely hurt our Father or Jesus, our Redeemer. Yet, like little children, we may make mistakes. But we have the assurance that God will not cast us away, for we have learned that God is faithful and willing to forgive. As children we will not desire to live in such a way as to grieve our Father by a wayward heart. Rather we will seek to live for God and will express our love in obedience. It is to such children that the assurance is given, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

"And if any man sin we have an advocate"

But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:24–25)

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

While there is no excuse for sin, God has nevertheless made provision for us if we do fall. Jesus Christ, the righteous one, ever liveth to make intercession for us.

When we are covered with the redeeming love and righteousness of Christ, we shall not take pleasure in sin, for Christ will

be working in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). In sorrow for our faults and in the confidence of God’s unfailing love, we may claim the blood of Christ, which is effectual to cleanse us from the guilt and stain of sin.

“Jesus Christ the righteous”

For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. (Hebrews 7:26)

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:18–19)

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

God’s favor and grace is not to be taken as a license for sin, or requiring merely a casual confession of our wrongs. No, that is not God’s plan. We have been admonished as children to sin not. God makes no demands and gives no commands to us without also providing a way for us to do what He has said. The righteousness of Christ credited to us makes us acceptable in God’s sight. Through a daily life of surrender to the will and way of God, Christ renews us in the inner man, strengthening us and giving us the desire to live to please Him.

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that

1 John Chapter 2

form of doctrine that was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (Romans 6:15–18)

1 John 2:2. And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

“He is the propitiation for our sins”

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3; see also Isaiah 53:5–12.)

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Galatians 1:3–5)

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3)

“But also for the sins of the whole world”

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:15)

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Timothy 2:6)

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. (1 John 4:14)

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. (1 Timothy 4:10)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

The sacrifice of Christ was sufficient not only for the righteous—of which, in truth, “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Therefore, Christ died not just for those who would believe in Him; He died to make a way of escape even for those who will never accept Him. The redemption price has been paid, both for those who will believe and for those who will not believe. However, salvation is only for those who trust in, cling to, and surrender to Christ as Savior and Lord. The will to believe and surrender while requiring our choice is prompted by the drawing, reproving work of the Spirit of God. Therefore, he who believes has no merits in himself; it is totally of Christ. And His merit and sacrifice is sufficient for all to be saved if only all would believe and accept the gift. For “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). What a wonder of redeeming love that Christ would die even while we were yet rebels and children of disobedience. Why would Jesus do this? Scripture reveals it was for the ultimate joy of seeing souls saved for eternity. He, “for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). And now, as our Advocate and High Priest, “He is able also to save [us] to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

1 John 2:3. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

And this is how we may discern [daily, by experience] that we are coming to know Him [to perceive, recognize, understand, and become better acquainted with Him]: if we keep (bear in mind, observe, practice) His teachings (precepts, commandments). (1 John 2:3 AMP)

1 John Chapter 2

There are two mistakes often made in the Christian world. Some believe they should keep the law and follow God's Word yet may not know Christ in a saving way. Others claim to know Christ yet neglect His word and His law. Both groups are in a lost condition. To know Christ in the scriptural sense is to be one with Him in heart and mind. This is brought about not through religion but by the grace of Christ renewing the life. This leads us to seek a knowledge of Him, with a desire to have communion with Him as Redeemer, Lord, and friend. Only by love leading to sincere obedience can this communion be sustained and developed. A true knowledge of Christ and of God leads us to want to obey. This obedience merits nothing; it is simply the result of true faith and love.

Jesus said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). As God's children we are to be experiencing the "sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience" (1 Peter 1:2). You will notice 1 John 2:3 does not say we are saved by obedience; rather, obedience to the word and law of God is the evidence that we really are coming to know and love Christ as little children. "It is only when we obey God's laws that we can be quite sure that we really know Him" (1 John 2:3 Phillips).

Lesson Four: 1 John 2:4–11

1 **John 2:4.** He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Someone may say, “I am a Christian; I am on my way to heaven; I belong to Christ.” But if he doesn’t do what Christ tells him to, he is a liar. (1 John 2:4 TLB)

When God’s Word calls us liars, we need not become irritated or say to ourselves, “This must apply to someone else but not to me.” Rather, we should take heed to God’s counsel of love rather than going on in spiritual falsehood. To be called liars may hurt our pride and leave us ashamed. However, it is better to be made aware of our self-deceived condition now so that we might repent; otherwise, we will go on in a vain and useless profession, only to have the hail of the seventh plague sweep away our “refuge of lies.” (See Isaiah 28:17.) If we wait until then to know and understand that we are liars and our profession is vain, it will be too late then to repent and be saved.

To know Christ in a saving relationship is to be strengthened by spiritual knowledge. It is to follow His word and His law; without this, all our profession of religion is vain. We cannot substitute performance of religious duty or a knowledge of religious things for knowing Christ.

What is the practical meaning of keeping God’s commandments?

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (1 John 3:22)

1 John Chapter 2

Pleasing God and thereby keeping His commandments does not come about because of our fear of punishment or from our hope of reward. Living to please God is motivated by our love for Him, and it is the essence of keeping His commandments.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. (2 Timothy 2:4)

Keeping God's commandments means to separate from all the entanglements of this world that would hinder our love, faith, and commitment to Christ.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. (Colossians 1:9-11)

Keeping God's commandments means having a desire to know God's will as our wisdom and spiritual understanding grows and deepens. This leads us to live to please Him in all things, bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God.

Further, truly keeping God's commandments is not simply following a list of dos and don'ts. It must go deeper than that. Commandment-keeping and obedience are the results of Christ's saving grace experienced. "So, since Christ suffered in the flesh for us, for you, arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose [patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God]. For whoever has suffered in the flesh [having the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God]" (1 Peter 4:1 AMP). This verse sums up what it really means to obey God and keep His commandments.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Within the Christian community, there are differences of opinion as to what commandments John was telling us we must keep. Some will say this is the Ten Commandments; others say it is the law of love; still others that John is speaking of God's Word. In fact, it is all of the above. However, to really understand our duty, let us briefly review the teachings of Christ and what He said regarding the commandments.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19)

Jesus taught: If we break God's commandments and by precept or example lead others also to break or to hold in disesteem the commandments of God, we will be counted least in heaven, for we will not be there.

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:36-40; see also Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18.)

Jesus taught: Love to God and man is the basis of the law and the teaching of the prophets.

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life and Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not

1 John Chapter 2

steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. (Mark 10:17–21)

Jesus taught: If we would gain eternal life and heaven, we must keep the Ten Commandments, which are written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit when we are renewed in Christ. While obedience is necessary if we are to have eternal life, it must come as the result of faith and enabling grace as we follow Christ. The man whom Jesus addressed trusted in his riches, not in God; therefore, he did not really keep the commandments as he claimed.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (John 14:15, 21, 23–24)

Jesus taught: If we love Him, we will keep His principles and follow His commandments, which includes His teaching on the moral law that He magnified and lived out in His own life and ministry.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. (John 15:10)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Jesus taught: Abiding in Him results in keeping or obeying His commandments even as He obeyed His Father's commandments. In addition, Jesus' commandments included loving God with all the heart, mind, and strength, and loving our fellow man. For this is the summation of the moral law and our duty. Both Jesus and John teach that obedience is the test of discipleship. Profession, praise, even prayer does not prove we know Christ, for many people do this. It is only keeping God's commandments as the direct result of God's grace and love infilling our heart that truly shows whether we are in Christ or if our profession is a lie.

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. (John 12:47–50)

Jesus taught: By precept and example as He followed the will and word of His Father, keeping all of His commandments and principles as He lived out the will of God in thought, word, and action. Jesus could declare at the end of His ministry, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" (John 8:46).

As Christ spoke to the religious leaders of His day who were seeking to kill Him, He asked them what wrongdoing or sin they could show He was guilty of. No one could accuse Jesus of wrongdoing or find Him guilty of sin. Scripture further reveals that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus lived by the law and word of God while giving no place to religious traditions. Now Jesus calls us to keep His commandments and follow His way as He followed His Father's commandments.

1 John Chapter 2

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15:3–9)

Jesus taught: Following man-made traditions instead of the word and commandments of God is useless. All religion based upon the commandments of men rather than the word and law of God is in the end vain worship and not acceptable to Him. Jesus taught that profession and praise, the mere religion of our lips, is not enough. Jesus wants our hearts and our lives. Only if He has our hearts we will obey Him. However, if a church, a creed, or a body of men has our hearts, we will follow the teachings and commandments of men. When we do that, we cannot obey God, and God's word stands as a witness against us and says we are liars.

1 John 2:5. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

In practice, the more a man learns to obey God's laws the more truly and fully does he express his love for him. Obedience is the test of whether we really live "in God" or not. (1 John 2:5 Phillips)

"Whoso keepeth his word"

And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. (Luke 11:27–28)

Jesus taught that His mother, Mary, was no more blessed than others who kept His word and followed it. In the same way, physical connection to a church or religion is valueless to save. Only the love of God in our lives, evidenced by keeping His word, truly shows that we are His children.

How do we keep His word?

All true obedience comes from a willing heart. This was the nature of Christ's obedience; it came from a heart knit with the heart of God. If we yield our hearts to Him, our lives will become so identified with Christ and His kingdom that our thoughts and aims will be to please Him. Christ desires to unite our hearts and minds to Him so that we live in conformity to His will. Then, when obeying Him, we shall be but carrying out our own hearts desire, sanctified by His grace.

When the will of man is surrendered to Christ, it will find its highest delight in doing God's will. For as we know and appreciate the character of Christ, through our communion with God and the study of His Word, sin will become hateful to us. Thus we can declare, "I delight to do thy will O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). Indeed, this is God's will for us and an evidence of keeping His word and of His love being perfected in our hearts.

"The love of God perfected"

Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall

1 John Chapter 2

cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.
(1 Corinthians 13:4–8)

To have a mind, an attitude, and a character that exhibits the attributes of 1 Corinthians 13 is the result of God's word becoming part of us. The principles of God's Word planted in our hearts by grace and love are to grow and mature. Then will God's love be perfected in us.

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:45–48)

God's love is not limited to any one class of people or race or religion. His love is to all mankind: those whom He justifies and pardons, and those who are yet estranged from Him. Therefore, the love of God in His children will also be kind to the just and unjust, to friend and stranger.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20–21)

Love is not a sentimental feeling but a heaven-born principle. With friends and family whom we love, we desire to make them happy and please them. So it will be in the lives of Christians toward God as His love is maturing in our hearts and lives.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

The feel-good religion of today, which deemphasizes God's Word for feelings and the ideas of men, can never lead believers to maturity. Only through God's Word, brought into the life through study and making application of its principles by the enabling of the Spirit, can the believer have the love of God perfected in his life.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2)

We are to day by day yield our hearts to God, as God's grace and love lead us away from the world and works to transform us. God fills us with His love, drawing our hearts to Him and we, in turn, love Him with a more mature and perfect love. Then we seek to do what is good and acceptable to Him. In this relationship of love, we are to allow the Word of God to abide in us as we study its precepts and follow its commands. Then the principles of love found in the above verses can develop and mature and become "perfected" in our lives. As this takes place we are being led of the Spirit, and in this obedient and surrendered life, we can know we are truly children of God.

1 John 2:6. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

"Ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"

If we claim to abide with Christ, to be His followers, we are admonished to live as He did. What an awesome privilege and sobering task. Should this cause us to grow discouraged or to throw up our hands, declaring this is impossible, and saying to ourselves,

1 John Chapter 2

“I believe in Jesus, I am going to heaven, and that is all that is required?” No. It is a day-by-day yielding to Christ and then day by day Christ enabling us. In 1 John 2:6 we are called to walk, live, and conduct our affairs following Christ’s example.

How did He live? He yielded Himself to the Father’s will, just as we are to live each day yielded to Christ. The epistle of 1 John is clearly calling us to obedience and commitment, and to reflect in our human sphere the perfection of Christ. Yet we will not fully obtain His divine perfection. You see, the moon is dead, just as we are spiritually dead, but in Christ we can be made alive. And just as the moon will never equal the power and might of the sun, yet in its sphere it reflects the light of the sun perfectly. So, too, is our calling, to realize there is nothing in us, no merit, no goodness, but as we yield to Christ, we can reflect His perfection, for the “path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18). Thus we are admonished to “walk, even as He walked.” Realize, however, that we do not walk alone; indeed, we cannot, for to walk as He walked means to walk with Jesus day by day.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

What does it mean to follow Christ’s steps and to walk as He walked? It is to be patient, gentle, kind, meek, and lowly in heart. Those who unite with Christ in heart surrender will deny self and take up the cross. But how can these things be? Well, friend, one thing is certain: You cannot go by your feelings. You cannot even go by what is presently being taught in most churches. You must go by the Word of God.

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. (1 John 2:29)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

If we can believe that Christ was righteous, holy, just, and good, we can know if we are born of Him, that we are being conformed to His image as we submit to His Spirit.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses. (Colossians 2:6–7, 13)

Having received Christ by faith, we should continue to live in union with Him, having our roots (our interests and affections) deeply planted in the Word, being built up by Him. This is how we can walk as He walked. For God has rescued us from spiritual death and brought to us life and blessing through Christ our Lord.

1 John 2:7. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

The teachings of Christ brought forth no new commandment; it was only the unveiling of that which had been covered up by sin and the religious traditions of men. The old commandment John speaks of is to love and obey God with all the heart, mind, and strength, and includes the command to love our fellow men. Indeed, this is the evidence of our love for the Father, which comes not from ourselves but is the result of the love of the Father being awakened in our own hearts by His Spirit that has drawn us.

1 John 2:8. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

1 John Chapter 2

As the darkness of sin and error is being cleared from our minds, the light and love of Christ increasingly takes its place. Then He who is the light of the world will shine “in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

1 John 2:9. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

To say we live in the light of God’s truth and that we love God, and yet detest a fellow human being or persecute a fellow believer, places us in the greatest darkness. To say we see the light of God’s truth and experience His love, and yet do not live it, we are blind and under a great delusion. To hate our brother is to exercise jealousy, evil surmising, bitterness and backbiting, and many other such evils. It is to rejoice in evil reports or another’s downfall. When we steal our brother’s property by borrowing and not returning it, or undermine his influence, or withhold our sympathy and help, we are exercising the spirit of hatred. If we have these thoughts, emotions, and actions in our lives, we can profess our love for God day and night, yet we are liars in God’s sight and far from Him.

1 John 2:10. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

Verse ten brings forth the contrast to verse nine, for he who truly loves his brother demonstrates that he is living in the light; therefore, he knows in his life and perceives in his heart the love and truth of God in reality. He who abides in the light, which is to live by the truth of Scripture enabled by the Spirit, does not cause others to stumble by an inconsistent course of living.

1 John 2:11. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

To despise or hate your brother means the light of God's love is not in you, and in reality you are still in the darkness of error and sin. We may think we are going to heaven, while in truth know not the way thereof, for in exercising this spirit we are yet blind and in darkness.

Throughout this epistle, John speaks much of loving others, for if we claim to love God, whom we have not seen, while hating those around us we do see, we lie and know not the truth. In addition, those who love others truly do so "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

A vain profession and living a lie or abiding in Christ, loving ourselves or loving God and thereby loving others, are the contrasting experiences presented to us in 1 John 2:4–11. My friend, examine well your profession in the light of God's Word, and ask for the enlightenment of the Spirit of God so that you might know whether your profession is a lie or if you are truly abiding in Him. Deal faithfully with your own soul, for your eternal destiny depends upon it.

Lesson Five: 1 John 2:12–17

1 **John 2:12.** I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

We need to become like little children, for only through child-like faith in Christ will we gain entrance into heaven. Being pardoned by faith is our admission to heaven as it enables us to become children of God. We become God's children when we are born again by "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Becoming children of God leads us to be humble, submissive, trusting, and obedient to our heavenly Father.

"Your sins are forgiven you"

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses. (Colossians 2:13)

We were spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, subject to eternal death and damnation. Yet Christ redeemed us and has freely forgiven us. This is made effectual in our behalf by grace through faith.

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Ephesians 1:5–7)

It is God's purpose that all should be His children, but this can only happen by adoption. We have nothing in ourselves to recommend us to God. Nothing we can do will ever merit the mercy

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

and pardon of God, for it is only in Christ that we are forgiven. Becoming God's children means making Christ our Savior and Lord. Apart from this experience, regardless of our religious zeal we are still in darkness and children of the wicked one.

1 John 2:13. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

The "fathers" in this verse are representative of those whose faith has grown strong and deep with the experience of time and of devotion. (See Titus 2:2.) The "young men" in the faith are overcoming the wicked one as they wait upon the Lord. The "little children" are those newly come to the faith. The children, young men, and fathers represent degrees of spiritual maturity, and all are accepted in Christ.

1 John 2:14. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

The "fathers" here are those of long experience who have come to know the goodness of God in a way that only years of walking by faith can accomplish. The "young men" are those who have grown strong in the Spirit because the word of God abideth in them. (See Psalm 119:9–10, 133; Titus 2:6–8.) These people do not just represent age groups but also experience. All believers are to be submissive as children in trust and love, knowing the joy of sins forgiven, making God their Father. We are all called to grow strong in the Word of God, thereby overcoming the evil of this world. These two experiences, combined with long years of faith, which "worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6), make up the fatherly grace of Christian maturity.

1 John Chapter 2

Let us not think, however, that to be a father in the faith means we must wait until we are old and gray to have a deep and abiding trust and love for God. While it is true that the experience of age may give us many insights through long years of serving God, it is heart surrender and love that make for a maturing character. Our experience in the things of God should deepen and grow throughout our Christian experience, represented as childhood, youth, and fatherly maturity.

1 John 2:15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

This verse is a command; it is not optional, for it will be the experience of every true child of God. The choice between love of the world and love of God is the decision set before every human being, for no man can serve two masters; it must be God or the world.

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Then how is it, as His children, that we are told not to love the world? God’s love for the world is a love for the lost race of humanity, but He hated our evil and sinful ways. We are admonished not to love the world’s vain pleasures and interests, its sin and selfishness, following the way of men contrary to the way and will of God. Loving the world means to focus our attention on that which is created and temporal more than on the Creator.

The seriousness of this admonition is seen in the fact that if we do love the world, the love of the Father is not in us. We are lost and still in our sins, regardless of our religious profession. Many might think this is too restrictive, that God is unreasonable. However, Jesus declared, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). The thief is all that is in the world that would steal our hearts’ allegiance to God. Jesus further stated in this verse, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” Separation from the world and allegiance to Christ and the principles of His word give us life abundantly now and eternal life in the future. In contrast, the love of the world will end in eternal loss.

The way of the world

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (1 John 3:1)

The world knows not Christ; it does not recognize or acknowledge Him. There is a religious element that professes to know Christ but is caught up in the spirit of the world. It does not obey Him; therefore, it does not really know Him. This is the spirit of the world.

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. (2 Peter 2:20)

The way of the world is the moral pollution of men's hearts and actions that have been tainted by sin.

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. (Galatians 1:4)

We are not to partake of or have fondness for the evil of this world, which is all that is in opposition to the word and law of God.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:6-7)

The carnal, unregenerate mind is not subject to the will and law of God and thereby demonstrates its hatred toward God. The commandments of men, the committees of men, the decrees of

1 John Chapter 2

church counsels, any religion, even if it professes Christ, yet does not practice and follow the word and law of God, is a carnal, unregenerate, worldly Christianity and is not of the Father.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

The god of this world blinds us to the glorious gospel, the good news of God's love and redeeming grace, leading us to ignore it, or reject it, or substitute something in its place. The way of the world makes the Word of God, His love and grace, and His requirements dark and mysterious and difficult to comprehend. This is the result of loving the world. And it separates us from the love of God.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (James 4:4)

Loving the world means taking pleasure in the world's sins with an attitude of neglect or rejection of God. This makes us God's enemy. The spirit of the world is antagonistic toward the will and way of God.

These few verses give us a biblical view of what it means to love the world. Loving the world is an attitude and spirit not guided by the principles of Scripture and subsequently leads to thoughts and actions opposed to morality and goodness. To love the world means to neglect, reject or substitute the will and word of God and His law for human ideas and commandments and religion. Loving the world means to be religious but not committed to loving and serving the Creator. Loving the world means to have more care and concern for the world than for the things of God. Loving the world is the natural state of the carnal, unregenerate heart, for it is

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

only a heart renewed that leads us to “seek . . . first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

1 John 2:16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

“Lust of the flesh”

The lust of the flesh is the craving for sensual gratification. It means we live to please the senses rather than following enlightened moral principles.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19–21)

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. (Philippians 3:18–19)

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. (Ephesians 4:17–19)

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For

1 John Chapter 2

where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. (James 3:14–16)

To live by the lust of the flesh is to follow the vanity of mind that leads to an understanding that is spiritually darkened and given over to sensual indulgence.

Whole industries—some illegal, but most of them legal and acceptable—cater to assisting us in indulging in the lusts of the flesh. Sensual indulgence in all its forms will weaken the mind and debase the soul. Even the intellectual powers of man are weakened by the gratification of the lusts of the flesh. While living for the world, it is impossible to rightly appreciate and understand the sacred obligation of the law of God, to appreciate the love of God and Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, and to rightly value eternal things.

“Lust of the eyes”

The eyes are a symbol of understanding, therefore the lust of the eyes is to have the mind view things from the standpoint of the world and to seek the things of the world. This is in contrast to the eye of understanding that seeks to follow the enlightened principles of God's Word.

Those who love the world and follow the “lust of the eyes” are becoming like the world in their emotions, plans, ideas, and imaginations. When we do this, we are separating ourselves from the Savior. Satan will press his way into this space, and the “lust of the eyes” fills us with worldly and selfish plans that will eventually dominate our entire experience, even though we still call ourselves Christians.

Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. (2 Peter 2:14–15)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Hearts and minds ever wandering from the right way, bound by sin and covetous ways, often claim to know God even while going their own way. These are some of the characteristics of those who love the world and follow the “lust of the eyes.”

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? (Luke 12:15–20)

Living a life where we are only thinking of our plans, our aspirations, and what we can acquire or achieve, while leaving God totally or largely out of the picture, is living by the lust of the eyes. Living a life motivated by the lust of the eyes is grasping for that which is temporal and leaving eternity and God out of our thinking. When our short lives and foolish dreams come to an end, we are eternally lost.

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, is all well? And he said, all is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of

1 John Chapter 2

the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments. And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him. And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him, went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow. (2 Kings 5:20–27)

The compromise of principle, and thus the forfeiture of that which was holy and good, is the result of the “lust of the eyes,” as seen in the covetousness of Elisha’s servant Gehazi. Many today do the same thing. Instead of following the way and will of God, they desire the material things of the world. Instead of trusting God to provide for their needs, they compromise and do what is evil to gain that which lasts but for a moment.

Often, like Gehazi, when we follow the lust of the eyes, we do it believing it is the will of God. Yet, like Gehazi, we lie. Then the leprosy of sin and selfishness clings to us, affecting our whole outlook and purpose in life, even as leprosy clung to Gehazi. This will always be the result of following the lust of the eyes. Therefore, our only safety is in constantly praying and seeking the Lord that He might “turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken ... me in Thy way” (Psalm 119:37).

“Pride of life”

The “pride of life” is an attitude of assurance in one’s own resources or in the stability of earthly things to the extent that it hinders our trust in God. This self-confidence works to set God aside in our lives. Exalting the things of this temporal life above spiritual matters, even if they are good, is the “pride of life.” This does not come from the Father, but is the spirit of the world. The pride of life is self-confidence, which is the great sin of the lukewarm professor in this Laodicean age. Self-confidence in all its forms will separate us from God. (See Revelation 3:14–21.)

We are weak, frail human beings. Even our wisdom and our might are foolishness and weakness in God’s sight. Therefore, the pride of life, our self-confidence in the things of men and what we can do apart from God, is detrimental to our spiritual life. We must confess, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). This attitude in the heart of one led by God leaves no place for the self-confidence of worldly pride. We need to learn to “trust in the Lord with all [our] ... heart; and lean not unto [our] ... own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

Many profess to love God, yet they really love the world and are bowing at the worldly shrines of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The next verse gives us an insight into what will happen to those who continue to love the world.

1 John 2:17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

And the world passes away and disappears, and with it the forbidden cravings (the passionate desires, the lust) of it; but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in his life abides (remains) forever.
(1 John 2:17 AMP)

The lovers of the world make religion subservient to the world. In contrast, God requires His people to subordinate the world to the principles of heaven and the Word of God. The things of the

1 John Chapter 2

world that soon perish are not to be made the first consideration in our plans and our lives. The world will one day pass away, judged and cleansed by fire. Only those who do God's will shall be saved in that day.

The warning of 1 John not to love the world speaks to God's people through the ages down to our own day. We are required to think and act distinct from the world in our customs, habits, and principles. This has always been the standard for the true people of God. Thus, God declares, "Love not the world" (1 John 2:15). If we by the grace of God have become His children, we will faithfully follow the teachings of His Word, and the distinction between the believer and the world will exist, for it cannot be otherwise.

"But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"

See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:15–22)

The above text sets before us the Christian experience both in attitude and in action. Further, it outlines for us what it means to follow the will of God. This is not something we can accomplish on our own, for we read, "Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. (1 Peter 4:1–2)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

For the Christian, all things in life are to be set against the will of God. The will of God, the ways of the world, and our own will all present different choices. For Christians who are developing the mind of the Lord, we no longer live our lives to the “lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication. (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Sanctification is the result of a daily surrender of the soul to God; it is to be consecrated and dedicated to God’s service. In the sanctified life, we abide with God and He with us, and we therefore overcome the world, rather than loving it.

“The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16) come naturally to us. However, when we become God’s children through a living faith, we are filled with His love. Therefore as His children, we no longer have our lives focused on the world but on the things of God. God’s children bring the principles of His Word into their lives, and through a renewed mind seek to know and follow the will of God; therefore, they overcome the world.

Loving the world or loving God—which is it in your life? Remember, it cannot be both; it must be Christ or the world. One leads to eternal loss; the other to eternal life. May you choose wisely, my friend, the direction you will take, as your eternal destiny is at stake.

Lesson Six: 1 John 2:18–29

1 **John 2:18.** Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

The early church and the disciples believed the words of Jesus recorded by John. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3). John remembered how he and the other disciples “came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3). World events seemed to be matching what Jesus said. Thus, John declared it must be the end times. However, Jesus mixed the signs to take place before the destruction of Jerusalem with the signs just before His second coming.

The destruction of Jerusalem was a type of the end of the world, with similar signs to take place before both events. When John wrote this epistle, believed to be between 85 and 90 AD, Jerusalem had been destroyed approximately 15 to 20 years earlier. Now John, with earnest love in His heart for His Master, and seeing the evil of the world about Him and the compromise of the Christian faith as the spirit of antichrist was gaining ground, kept alive the hope that He lived in the last hours.

The belief and hope of the soon coming of Christ has always been part of the faith of every true believer. For as we look at this dark world of sin and sorrow, we desire to be in the kingdom of light and glory. This earnest desire is brought about because even now we are living in the kingdom grace, and the love of God fills our hearts. As we see the evil in the world and the compromise of faith, we, like John, see the spirit of antichrist about us. The love of Christ in us, and our desire to serve and follow Him, make the contrast of this dark world apparent and painfully obvious.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Therefore, in our hope, expectation, and spiritual understanding, and in our manner of life, we, like John, believe and live as if this is “the last time.”

1 John 2:19. 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 went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

The “spirit of antichrist” represents those who oppose the will and word of God. Those who have gone away from the truth while maintaining their Christian profession are the most deadly agents of antichrist. Others go out from the truth and their belief in Christ and no longer make a profession at all; these too are opposed to the will and word of God, having the spirit of antichrist. It is not those who make a profession of Christ or religion who are true believers, but those who love the truth and follow it. John, throughout his epistle, calls those who oppose the will and word of God liars, regardless of their profession. Those who leave the truth, whether they remain in or go out of the church, make it manifest that they are not really a part of the church at all.

We learn from John that the antichrist is not an individual at the end of time but a spirit that comes from within the Christian community and leads people away from Christ through substitution, error and perversion of the truth.

1 John 2:20. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

This unction is the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Christ’s representative. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13). The Spirit’s work is to guide us into truth and to reveal Christ to us. And it’s in this sense that John declared, “You know all things,” for those whom he addressed knew Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). For if we

1 John Chapter 2

know Christ, this is eternal life, and there can be no more important knowledge than this. (See John 17:3.)

Further, the unction of the Spirit leads us to the truth of the Word of God as we compare spiritual things with spiritual things. (See 2 Corinthians 2:13–14.) The unction of the Spirit never leads us into error and fanaticism, nor sets the commands of men and of churches above the Word of God. Rather, that is a manifestation of the antichrist spirit. By the truth of Scripture we can readily know and identify the spirit and teachings of antichrist that are opposed to Christ and His word.

1 John 2:21. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

John's epistle is addressed to the little children, to the youth who know the word of God, and to the maturing and experienced fathers; each one is to know and follow the truth. Truth, you see, will keep us from error and the falsehood that endangers our Christian experience and our love and knowledge of God. Knowing God's truth will keep us from stumbling. For God's Word will never lie; it is trustworthy. "Thy word is true from the beginning" (Psalm 119:160). No lie can be truth, yet virtually all lies, especially in regard to spiritual things, attach themselves to some degree of truth. Therefore, knowing the truth is the greatest tool to avoid the spiritual deception of the last days. For this reason it is essential that we study and know the Word of God for ourselves. We must give heed to the admonition, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

The spirit of antichrist can be manifested in individuals, churches, and ministries and will always attach its lies to some degree of truth. Therefore, we must not only love the truth of God's Word, we must also live it, lest falsehood find some foothold in our lives and we are led into deception, even to the point that in our hearts we oppose the will and word of God.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

1 John 2:22. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

And what, I ask you, is, the crowning lie? Surely the denial that Jesus is God's anointed one, his Christ. I say, therefore, that any man who refuses to acknowledge the Father and the Son is an anti-christ. (1 John 2:22 Phillips)

John is warning believers not to accept the false ideas being taught on the nature of Christ and the perversion of the gospel that accompanies such teachings. In John's day questions arose, such as "Was Christ the divine Son of God?" and "Was Christ the Son of man really like us?" "Maybe Jesus was just a spirit, and not really here at all." These perversions are still with us to this day.

Though many people and religions claim to believe in God or a god, in denying Christ they also deny God, for Jesus declared, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. (John 8:17-19)

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. (John 6:44-45)

The spirit of antichrist leads to rejecting Christ. This can be by denial, substitution, or neglect. In whatever way one denies Christ, one has rejected God. This does away with the idea of the inter-faith movement that teaches that all the religions of the world are simply different paths to God, while de-emphasizing or rejecting

1 John Chapter 2

Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). We cannot truly know God unless we accept His Son as Lord and Savior. Saying that we believe in a deity or higher power and that Jesus was a righteous man, a wise teacher, a prophet, will get us nowhere. If we believe Jesus was any of these things but do not accept His testimony that He was the Savior of the world, we are fooling ourselves and the truth is not in us. In the rejection of Christ, in whatever form it takes, our knowledge of God is mingled with error and we create a false god, which in the end is a lie that can only lead to eternal loss.

1 John 2:23. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

This verse tells us that all religions, even professedly Christian sects or churches, that do not recognize the divinity of Christ do not really know God as Father. To acknowledge the Son is to believe that He came to this earth as a man by the mystery of the virgin birth; that He lived a sinless life and died for our sins and then rose again from the grave; that He has ascended to heaven, where He ministers for us as High Priest in the sanctuary above. To deny any aspect of the fullness of Christ puts us in danger of accepting some form of falsehood that will substitute or set something or someone in the place of Christ. We must accept the fullness of Christ in His humanity and divinity, as our risen Lord and High Priest who “ever liveth to make intercession for” us (Hebrews 7:25).

Though we may profess the name of Christ, this does not remove the possibility that we may in fact deny Him. Let us understand what it means to deny Christ.

Man can individually exercise the spirit of antichrist, which is to reject God’s will and word for our lives by evil speaking, by foolish talking, by words that are untruthful or unkind. The denial of Christ may be exercised by the pursuit of sinful pleasure. The denial of Christ can be done by conforming to the practices and principles of the world, by the love of our own opinions, by justifying self, by cherishing doubt, and by dwelling in darkness. In all

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

these ways we declare that Christ is not in us, and that we have taken hold of the spirit of antichrist, which is to deny the Father and the Son. We may have the correct doctrine on the nature of Christ and the truthfulness and existence of God, but unless we are born again and are walking in the light, we cannot truly know the Father or the Son.

1 John 2:24–25. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

John is admonishing us to let the truth, light, and love of God abide in our hearts, for as we do this we have fellowship with the Father and Son, and the hope and promise of eternal life shall be ours. The truth of salvation that we have known and have “heard from the beginning” (1 John 2:24) is not to be substituted for the pleasing errors and falsehoods that promise us life in sin and fellowship with Christ while practicing the ways of the world.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). Our lives are to continually grow in grace so that the gospel of salvation and the love of God received into our hearts at the beginning may continue unto eternal life. Our life in Christ is to “abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9–11).

1 John 2:26. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

The counsel and truth John has shared in verses 18 to 25, and indeed his whole epistle, is intended to keep us from being led

1 John Chapter 2

astray. The truths John is teaching regarding Christ, salvation, and the Christian experience are the very things that the lie is seeking to attach itself to in order to deceive. To know the truth found in the epistle of 1 John is to be forewarned and forearmed to overcome the evil one and the antichrist spirit of our age.

1 John 2:27. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

The anointing is the Holy Spirit; the same Spirit Jesus said would guide us into all truth. (See John 16:13.) The Spirit gives spiritual gifts and calls some to be teachers and pastors, through whom the Spirit teaches. (See Ephesians 4:11–14.) The Spirit also teaches us individually, as we seek to know the truth of God. Therefore, we need not look to men alone to teach us. We should go to God’s Word for ourselves and pray, asking for the enlightenment of the Spirit, and in earnest study, seek to know the will and way of the Lord. When the Spirit teaches, He does so according to and in agreement with the Scriptures, the word of truth, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth” (1 Corinthians 2:13). Beware of any spirit that comes to you, be it through men or from your own heart, that teaches without the Word of God or contrary to it. Indeed, all spirits, even the Holy Spirit, are to be tested by the Scriptures.

1 John 2:28. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Abiding is a key theme in 1 John. Only those who abide in Christ and live for Him shall be able to stand before Him at His coming. What does it mean to abide in Him? Let us learn the answer from the Scriptures.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. (John 15:4)

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. (John 15:10)

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. (1 John 3:24)

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

The closeness of the branch to the vine is compared to the closeness of the believer to Christ. From Christ we are to daily receive strength and grace to live the Christian life in word and deed. Our spiritual life is only as strong as our connection to Christ. In surrendering our will and way, we abide in Him and receive from Him the life of heaven that allows us to live according to the principles of Scripture.

Abiding in Christ means our affections are changed. We are no longer centered on the world but on the principles of heaven. To abide with Christ means we are dead to worldly ways. Our hope and purpose are set on Christ. Indeed, our very lives are bound up with Christ as our hope for the future and as our Master and Savior now.

The fruits in the life of one abiding in Christ

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have

1 John Chapter 2

crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (Galatians 5:22–24)

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:4–8)

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (James 3:17)

Abiding in Christ is choosing the way of Christ, seeking and following His will. Abiding in Christ is a life of unreserved surrender to His service. As the word of God is accepted into the heart and lived out in the life, Christ abides in His followers, for the words of Christ are spirit and life. Only as we gain and maintain this relationship can we assure our hearts of salvation. In this life of abiding in Christ, we can look forward to His coming in hopeful expectation and without fear. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isaiah 25:9).

1 John 2:29. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Since we know that God is always good and does only right, we may rightly assume that all those who do right are his children. (1 John 2:29 TLB)

God is the only example in the universe of righteousness and holiness. All created intelligences are at best only reflections of God's righteousness. We as humans can only be righteous, or morally good, as the God of all good abides with us. Thus the evidence that we are born again is in the demonstration of the righteous principles of God's law and word as seen in our lives and our deeds. Righteousness is holiness, and in the renewed life there will be a growing likeness to God in character. The righteousness of those who are born again is the result of surrendering all to God; righteousness then is doing the will of our heavenly Father.

Chapter Three

Lesson Seven: 1 John 3:1–10

1 John 3:1. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

As we understand the love of Christ, as we see in Him the beauty of holiness, we stand amazed. Yet just as amazing is the love of the Father made manifest and demonstrated in those who are born again, who have received the love of God into their hearts and become sons and daughters of God. God's love is to be beheld by faith, to be taken hold of with the intellectual understanding, and by the evidence of our own hearts, which have been moved upon by God's love and changed. God's love can be beheld though the Scriptures and through the story of the cross. But the greatest means to behold the love of God is by that love awakened in our sin-darkened hearts and drawn out in faith and love to Him whom we see not. And why do we love Him? We love God because He first loved us. This love in our hearts for Him, this change of life and purpose, is the evidence of God and His wonderful love. Knowing this love from the depth of his being, John could only describe it by declaring, "Behold, what manner of love."

Because the life we live through the love of God is contrary to that of the unconverted world, we will be hated and misunderstood, just as Jesus was. Why? Because the principles of the world and heaven's principles are opposed to each other. There can be no harmony between light and darkness, sin and righteousness.

1 John 3:2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that,

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

To be the sons of God, to be God's children, is not something we must wait for, something that takes place only after we get to heaven. No, John declares we can be the children of God now. The glories of the future are not ours to know, for it does not yet appear what we shall be. However, we can be children of God now as we know Christ's redeeming love, as we know the power of forgiveness and the work of holiness, in living a life of commitment and service to God. As we, by the grace of God, partake of the "divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4), we are forming a character that is a reflection of Him whom we love and worship. Therefore, when He comes to redeem us, we shall be like Him. "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

1 John 3:3. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Everyone who has the expectation and confidence of seeing Christ, and knowing what it means to be a child of God, will seek to live a life in harmony with God's will and law. Not only are we *called* the sons of God, we are also to *be* the sons of God. And how is this accomplished?

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. (John 1:12)

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)

In 1 John 3:2-3 it is speaking of Christ's second coming. But first He must appear in us as we become like Him through faith, surrender, and love. While there may be marked defects in the

1 John Chapter 3

character of each one of us, yet when we become true disciples of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies us. “Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,” we are to be “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Only in this experience can we, with hope and confidence, be like Him and see Him in peace at His coming.

1 John 3:4. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Everyone who commits (practices) sin is guilty of lawlessness; for [that is what] sin is, lawlessness (the breaking, violation of God’s law by transgression or neglect—being unrestrained and unregulated by His commands and His will). (1 John 3:4 AMP)

Some may argue as to what sin is, or if indeed there is sin at all, but God here makes it plain. Sin is the violation of His moral law in thought, word, or action. It is living outside His will and purpose for our lives. Today we live in a time of moral relativism, a belief that there are no moral absolutes; however, nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible declares all sin will be judged and every person held accountable by God. We may neglect this testimony; some may even scoff at it. However, it will stand to witness against us in the judgment, and no man shall escape.

Scripture tells us, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). How is it then that we can be children of God? Verse five tells us.

1 John 3:5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Praise God! Jesus came to this world for the purpose of taking away my sin and yours. He takes away our guilt and condemnation, and we pass from death unto life. We become “followers of God as dear children” (Ephesians 5:1), children who, through

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

“faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6), seek to obey and please their Father in heaven.

How is Christ taking away our sin? The following Scriptures teach us.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29)

Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. (Acts 3:26)

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1–4)

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 10:16–17)

When Jesus took away our sins, He took away our guilt and condemnation. It is by the surrender of our hearts to His drawing love and grace that we accept this gift. Jesus goes a step further, for He came “in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned

1 John Chapter 3

sin in the flesh,” that His holy and righteous law “might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3–4). Christ, by His Spirit, works out in us obedience to His will and law in our thoughts and actions, as we live guided by and submitted to the Spirit. In this way sin, which has brought guilt and condemnation, is overcome, through faith motivated by love for our Redeemer.

Jesus came for one purpose: to take away our sins by becoming a substitute and sacrifice for us. Christ not only takes away the guilt and condemnation of sin, He works through the heart, regenerated and renewed day by day, to take sin out of our lives. Thus, John could declare in verse six:

1 John 3:6. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

No one who abides in Him [who lives and remains in communion with and in obedience to Him—deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] commits (practices) sin. No one who [habitually] sins has either seen or known Him [recognized, perceived, or understood Him, or has had an experiential acquaintance with Him]. (1 John 3:6 AMP)

The lives of those who have Christ abiding in their hearts will reveal practical godliness. There is also a class of people who continue in sin and, regardless of religious profession, do not know or perceive the love of God.

1 John 3:7. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

Let no one deceive and lead you astray. He who practices righteousness [who is upright, conforming to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action, living a consistently conscientious life] is righteous, even as He is righteous. (1 John 3:7 AMP)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Let us not be deceived; none are truly righteous unless first cleansed and pardoned by Christ. He who is righteous will make it manifest in his life by righteous living. This is not a human standard of righteousness. The righteousness of Christ renewing us from within will be manifested by righteousness without. No profession of religion, without a corresponding faith and love that leads to a righteous life, will be acceptable by God, for we read in verse eight:

1 John 3:8. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

He who commits sin [who practices evildoing] is of the devil [takes his character from the evil one], for the devil has sinned (violated the divine law) from the beginning. The reason the Son of God was made manifest (visible) was to undo (destroy, loosen, and dissolve) the works the devil [has done]. (1 John 3:8 AMP)

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:34, 44)

Jesus, speaking to a class of religious leaders who claimed to serve God, told them that they in reality served the devil. John is taking up the same teaching as his Master. Both in his day and in ours, many are serving the devil despite their profession of religion and the praise that falls from their lips. The people Jesus addressed, and those whom John is speaking to, would be shocked to know they served the devil. Yet it is demonstrated that this is so because they commit sin, excuse sin, and allow sin in thought and action.

1 John Chapter 3

Yet Jesus can destroy the works of the devil in our hearts if we will yield to Him and allow His Spirit to guide us.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (Romans 6:16–18)

The source of all righteousness is God, and the ultimate source of sin is the devil. Jesus came to this world the first time to destroy the works of the devil. He does this by destroying the devil's claim over us if we choose to be drawn by His love and align ourselves with Him, being justified by faith. As we choose to be led of God, Christ will destroy the works of darkness in our lives. Christ will illuminate our sin-darkened hearts and begin to renew our minds, which have been debased and morally desensitized by sin. We are then empowered by Christ's grace. Finally, Christ will redeem us from the grave, for "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).

1 John 3:9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Intentional sin is to be done away with. Further, as the seed of Christ's love and word, the divine work of the Holy Spirit dwells in us, our desire for sin will be overtaken by our desire to love and obey God. As the word of God and the kingdom of grace are implanted in our hearts, a change takes place. We hate those things that are evil in God's sight.

The message of 1 John 3:9 contemplates the complete recovery of man from sin as the seed of Christ's love matures in our hearts, growing from blade to ear, to full corn in the ear. (See Mark 4:28–29.) We are not yet ready for the harvest, but we should be praying

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

for the Lord of the harvest to accomplish His work in us. With diligence and earnestness on our part, we should be receiving daily the divine seed, allowing it to be planted in the heart by the grace of God. Then our hearts will be soft and tender to hear and follow the will of God, overcoming in Christ. (See James 1:21.)

1 John 3:10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Some have the mistaken notion that every individual is a child of God. Verse 10 reveals that this is not true. Every man's life continues by the power and mercy of God, yet each individual serves either God or the devil and is therefore the child of one or the other. God's children, made righteous by the blood of Christ, receiving pardon and grace, live to please God and are empowered of God to live a righteous life. The children of the devil may be very sincere, may even be religious, yet if their hearts are not made pure by God through His Spirit, their lives will not be in conformity to God's Word and law. By nature, we hate God and are thus Satan's children. We manifest this hatred toward God when we are carnal and unregenerate. "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:6-8).

Many people, though religious, hate or at least have little regard for those not of their faith, ethnicity, or tribe. This shows they are not God's children, regardless of the religion they profess. As we experience the love of God in our hearts, we will be kind to others and have a special love toward those who are also children of God.

Dear friend, whose side are you on? Are you a child of God or a child of the devil? When answering this question, we cannot go by our feelings, our church affiliation, or our profession; we must go by the Word of God. And God's Word declares, "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God."

1 John Chapter 3

Deal truly with your heart and ask Jesus to help you. Let His Word and His Spirit correct you, if necessary, and lead you to a proper understanding of your condition. Jesus said, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:19). Allow Jesus to help you to repent and be healed so that you can declare, in word and life, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon [me], that [I] should be called the [son] of God” (1 John 3:1).

Lesson Eight: 1 John 3:11–24

1 John 3:11. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

John declares that every true believer will live a life of commitment and obedience as the outgrowth of the love of God filling his heart. This love leads to loving others. It is not possible to truly love others and yet not love and obey God. We cannot claim to love God and yet not love our fellow man. Some people find it easy to profess love and devotion to God while despising or hating another human being. Others find it easy to love others but are actually at war with God and manifest hatred toward Him by not following His word and law. In either case, such people have not yet truly known the love of Christ.

1 John 3:12. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

As children of God we are to love one another. This is not to be forced, but is the outgrowth of the love of heaven in our hearts. We are not to have a love like that of Cain. Surely Cain must have loved his brother Abel, to some extent, for they were brothers. However, because Cain had not given his life to the Lord, his heart was controlled by the wicked one. Cain, while very religious, sought to follow God on his own terms. Though he “brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord” (Genesis 4:3), which indicates a great zeal in worshipping God, his worship was based on the commandments of men. And what was the result of a religion that sought its own way? The natural love that is to be among family gave place to jealousy, evil surmising, and anger. He that is angry with his brother is a murderer in his heart. (See Matthew 5:21–22.)

1 John Chapter 3

The elements of Cain's depraved heart found release in the murder of Abel.

In the lives of Cain and Abel, we see that allegiance to God or disobedience to Him determines who controls our lives and whether we are under the influence of God's love or Satan's hatred. People who are under Satan's influence or control exercise the spirit of hatred, bitterness, anger, and strife.

1 John 3:13. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

The way of the world is found in Galatians 5:19–21. It is a life lived according to the dictates of the fleshly, unregenerate nature. This is the way of Cain. We should not marvel if the world, or even worldly Christians, hate us. Christians by the thousands are killed, persecuted, and imprisoned every year. Where we live in this world determines our relative safety or insecurity as Christians. In much of the world very few will be killed for their faith. However, fault-finding, slander, ridicule, prejudice, and discriminatory laws show that many individuals and religious and governmental authorities are of the wicked one.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. (John 15:18–19, 21)

Jesus gives us an insight into the reason behind the estrangement in families and churches, and why there is persecution between different religions groups that all claim to worship God. He says it is because they do not know Him. The pagan Roman Empire

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

of John's day and unbelieving Jews, though religious, both denied the Lord Jesus Christ and made the lives of Christians difficult. Today we live in a world of varying religious persuasions; indeed, the majority of the world's inhabitants are religious. However, regardless of our religious profession and zeal, if we know not the love of God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, we cannot truly love others. And the true believer, as in the days of Jesus and John, will be hated in one form or another by the world.

1 John 3:14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

Jesus taught, "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" (Matthew 5:46). John is speaking of a love that has as its source the redeeming love of Christ. The fruit borne from this relationship is love for God and love for others. Loving others is not the gospel, neither is it the source of salvation or gaining merit with God; it is the result of God's redeeming love experienced in our lives. Therefore, no matter what our profession of religion may be, if we love not our fellow human beings, we abide in death, for this shows we are still in our sins.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). The Word of God shows us what it really means to love others. This heaven-born love cannot be generated by man, for it is a principle that exists only where Christ is in the heart.

There is much feel-good religion in the world, and many churches that speak of love and are involved in charitable works. But many religious people do not really love God, and consequently do not love others according to the principles of the Bible. Let us take a moment to go to the Bible and examine our hearts to see if we have known the love of God and the subsequent fruit it bears in loving others.

“We love the brethren”

Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride); it is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly.

Love (God’s love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it; [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love bears under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. (1 Corinthians 13:4–7 AMP)

[Let your] love be sincere (a real thing); hate what is evil [loathe all ungodliness, turn in horror from wickedness], but hold fast to that which is good. Love one another with brotherly affection [as members of one family], giving precedence and showing honor to one another. Contribute to the needs of God’s people [sharing in the necessities of the saints]; pursue the practice of hospitality. Bless those who persecute you [who are cruel in their attitude toward you]; bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice [sharing others’ joy], and weep with those who weep [sharing others’ grief]. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is honest and proper and noble [aiming to be above re-

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

proach] in the sight of everyone. (Romans 12:9–10, 13–17 AMP)

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32)

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8)

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Philippians 2:3–4)

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends. (Proverbs 17:9)

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. (1 Peter 3:8–11)

The scriptural principles cited above define love and its effect upon our hearts and attitudes and actions. We can see similar characteristics and aspirations with people of many religions. However, only those who have received the love of heaven into their hearts can rightly live out these far-reaching principles, which far exceed the vague calls to peace, love, and harmony espoused by the religions of the world. Remember, “God is love” (1 John 4:16), therefore only he who has known the love of God can truly love others.

1 John Chapter 3

1 John 3:15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

John is remembering the teachings of His Master, who taught, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:21–22). John is simply repeating the teachings of Him who is “from the beginning ... the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). The principles of the kingdom of God teach us that if we have hatred, jealousy, or bitterness in our hearts toward our fellow human beings, we are murderers. This spirit shows we have not the love of God in our hearts. Christ is not there. It is only he who “hath the Son” who has “life,” “and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12), no matter what his religious profession may be.

1 John 3:16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

The love of God is most clearly perceived and understood at the cross, yet sadly many in the world ignore the cross. In so doing they ignore the greatest demonstration of God’s love. If we cannot or will not look at the cross, we will never really know the love of God. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7–8).

John is telling us it is only in the death of Him who was “God ... manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16) that we can know God’s love. Only in knowing and experiencing God’s love can we love our brethren as well. The love of Christ led Him to give up His life for us, and we are recipients of that love. For this reason we are to “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: [who] made

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5, 7).

This death to self will be seen in our attitudes and actions toward others that demonstrate the principle of heaven-born love. The love of Christ in our hearts will, if necessary, lead us to lay down our lives, not only for the truth’s sake but also for fellow believers.

John wrote in a time of persecution and peril under the Roman Empire. It was necessary at times to lay down one’s life to protect one’s fellow believers. This sacrifice came not from mere human nobility but from the love of Christ in the heart. Only the love in our hearts, placed there through the love and sacrifice of Christ, can truly make us noble, kind, and self-sacrificing. All human nobility and sacrifice is of no value unless we have known the love of heaven. (See 1 Corinthians 13:3.)

1 John 3:17–18. But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

But if anyone has this world’s goods (resources for sustaining life) and sees his brother and fellow believer in need, yet closes his heart of compassion against him, how can the love of God live and remain in him? (1 John 3:17 AMP)

Little children, let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions. (1 John 3:18 TLB)

God is the one who “giveth to all life, and breath, and all things,” and “in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28). If God is the great example of giving, we who are His children should give as we are able, and with prayerful consideration, even sacrificially if need be. God gave His Son to save us who are sinners. If we truly know the love and mercy of God, we should help

1 John Chapter 3

our brethren in need. To do otherwise is simply a vain profession, for love is to be exemplified in action, not just in our talk.

1 John 3:19. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

Knowing the truth of Scripture is good; however, living it in word and deed, which leads to a righteous and morally upright life, shows that we “are of the truth.” If our treatment, attitude, and words toward others follow the biblical counsel we claim to believe, this is evidence that “we are of the truth.” When living the truth in thought, word, and action by the enabling grace of Christ, we can have hearts and minds free from guilt and condemnation. This assurance of salvation and freedom from condemnation is not in ourselves but in Christ and His righteousness, which cleanses us from all sin and enables us to live godly and upright lives.

1 John 3:20. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

The nearer we approach to God’s ideal for us, the more we will see in ourselves that which is unworthy when compared to the perfection of holiness seen in the life of Christ. However, God is faithful, and though we recognize in ourselves our unworthiness, there is One who is worthy, and we must trust in Him.

Still, we may sometimes find our hearts troubled and our conscience condemning us. But God is a greater and more perfect judge and discerner than our own hearts, for He knows all things. He knows what is troubling our conscience. In fact, it is His Holy Spirit that reproves us of sin. (See John 16:8.) A troubled conscience is God’s invitation to us to “confess our sins, for He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The greatest thing to fear is not the conscience of a righteous man who recognizes his need and unworthiness; neither is it the troubled conscience of one with unconfessed or unforsaken sin.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

The greatest thing to fear is a conscience that is not troubled by its estrangement from God and does not sense or recognize its need.

1 John 3:21–22. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

We can live a life free of guilt and condemnation through trust and surrender to Christ. This will give us confidence to approach God as our loving Father. The sinful and selfish heart of man keeps us from God. We can depart from the truth and still make a profession of faith, yet our hearts will become desensitized, hardened by “the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13). In this condition we may believe we are saved and serving God, yet we are far from Him. This was the case with many in Jesus’ day. Profession is not enough; our lives will show if we really love God. We must remember John’s words: “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:7, 10).

As we love God in truth and follow Him, we can have confidence to pray. This confidence is not in ourselves, but in the promises of God, believing as we pray that we shall receive from Him. We live according to the will of God, keeping His commandments and seeking to please Him in love. This experience does not merit anything before God; rather, it is the result of our surrender and trust in Him. Our Father delights to hear and answer the petitions of His children.

1 John 3:23–24. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

1 John Chapter 3

The commandment we are to live by is to trust in, surrender to, and follow Jesus. Letting the light of His redeeming love shine in our lives will bring glory to God and lead us to love our brethren. Living a life of love and obedience through His Spirit, which He has given us, demonstrates that Christ is in us. The Spirit abiding in us comes, “teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). A spirit that does not enable us to live this way is not the Spirit of Christ.

Many the world over believe they are living life in the Spirit. But let us look at the Scripture evidence of what it means to be guided and enabled by the Spirit.

“We know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us”

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:22–26)

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. (1 Peter 1:2)

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14:17)

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. (Ephesians 5:9–10)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:4-5)

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. (John 16:7-8)

But I say, walk and live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God). (Galatians 5:16 AMP)

We can know that Christ abides in us by the evidence of the Spirit in our lives. Sadly, Christians throughout the world often put more emphasis on what they believe are outward manifestations of the Spirit rather than on the Spirit's real work, which is to bring about a transformed life. Walking in the Spirit is a life of consecrated, obedient service to God, evidenced by a godly and upright life that loves the Lord and seeks to please Him. This is the real evidence that Jesus abides with us, not emotional experiences and worship, religious ecstasy, or mere profession.

Chapter Four

Lesson Nine: 1 John 4:1–6

1 **John 4:1.** Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Dearly loved friends, don't always believe everything you hear just because someone says it's a message from God: test it first to see if it really is. (1 John 4:1 TLB)

Though John is about to tackle a very important issue that could lead to the loss of souls, he reminds his readers (including you and me) that we are beloved. John had a tender regard for the spiritual condition of those in the Christian community, for his heart was knit with the heart of God. Here he is expressing God's attitude toward us. God is desirous that we who profess to be His children will not be deceived by the errors of the devil working through men. Therefore, we are not to believe all those who appear to have spiritual gifts and claim to be messengers of God. This is a command. We are instructed to test the spirits; that is, the messengers with the supposed gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:7–10. We are to test the messengers not by our feelings, our human and emotional attachments, but by the Word of God, the only reliable discerner between truth and error. The word of knowledge the messengers pronounce, the healings they perform, the faith they exhibit, and the prophecies they declare all must meet the criteria of Ephesians 4:12–14, the highlights of which are noted below.

The teachings of God's true workers, be they ministries, churches, or individuals, will be for:

1. The perfecting of the saints (Ephesians 4:12), to bring them to spiritual maturity.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

We cannot as messengers of God effect spiritual growth in anyone, for that is the work of God and the will of man surrendered to Him. However, every true messenger will seek in their ministry and work to live and teach in such a way as to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28). This will be the desire of every true messenger of heaven.

2. The work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12), will be seeking to build up others in faith and love so that they too will consecrate their talents and gifts to the service of God.

The purpose of every true messenger is to minister to and build up the faith of others, not to get reward or praise or fame, or to bring in false but pleasing ideas. Far too often false messengers (though they do not see themselves as such) are ministering to build up their careers, their bank accounts, or their popularity. This is not ministry at all, but the work of false prophets, wolves in sheep’s clothing. (See Matthew 7:15.)

3. The edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12), means to build them up in truth and righteousness.

The work of God’s true messengers will not be seeking to build up the self-esteem and pride of the people. Edification of the church does not consist of entertainment and pleasing sermons and giving the people what they want. Such ministry is not the mark of a true messenger but of a false prophet. The work of the true messenger is edification of the body of Christ, which consists of thorough instruction in divine things, so that every member of the church might desire to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

4. The faithful messengers of God are to continue to teach the truth of Scripture “till we all come in the unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:13).

The messenger is to bring people to the Bible, where we can be united in faith and truth. Human speculation and the teachings

1 John Chapter 4

of men can never bring true unity. True unity of the faith must be based on fellowship with Christ and close adherence to the will and Word of God.

5. Bringing people to “the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:13).

The teaching of God’s true workers will be to bring others to the knowledge of Christ. True messengers of God will not be satisfied with large numbers having a mere profession of religion. No, the heart’s desire of every true messenger is to see men and women and young people coming to know Christ. This will not be based upon sentimental feelings and selfish motives offered by the purveyors of feel-good religion that use the marketing and psychological techniques of the world mixed with God’s Word. Christ-centered, biblical teaching empowered by God is the only sure foundation of ministry for God’s true messengers.

6. Ministering to see others advance “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

The teachings of God’s true workers will cause people to grow up to be mature, sound, and sober-thinking Christians who seek to please Christ, their Master. While this will not be the experience of all who have the privilege of being taught and ministered to by the Lord’s servants, this will be the life’s desire and purpose of the true messenger. The work of the ministry is to set Christ before the people so that they may “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

7. Declaring the truth in clarity and power, “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14).

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

God's true workers will seek to ground people in the truth so they can think for themselves, know the truth, and follow it. The true messenger will teach and encourage all to be dependent upon Christ and His word.

Jesus has warned us of the falsehood of the many. In addition, John declared that many false spirits have gone out into the world. Therefore, we must be on our guard. We must "study to shew [ourselves] approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We are to test all spirits and teachings by the truth of God's Word.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (Matthew 24:4-5)

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:21-23)

Christ's counsel, recorded by Matthew, shows us why it is imperative that we test the spirits, messengers, ministries, and churches that claim to speak for God. Many of those who appear genuine are actually not part of Christ, despite the wonderful works they do in His name. This is why we must test all things by the Word of God.

Those who have a form of godliness but know not the power are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. (See 2 Timothy 3:1-5.) They exhibit the spirit of antichrist and become Satan's most effective helpers. Many false prophets and teachers are popular and intelligent, and they serve as agents to draw others into the spirit of antichrist, which is a spirit that opposes the will and word of God.

1 John Chapter 4

Most Christians do not fear their influence, because they profess belief in Christ and the Bible. However, these false teachers, the agents of antichrist, will lead the people to believe that the requirements of Christ are less strict than they once believed, and that by conformity to the spirit of the world they will exert a greater influence in society. Thus, whole churches will separate from Christ through the deceptive and pleasing teaching of the false prophets and teachers.

1 John 4:2–3. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Confusion over the nature of Christ is an error that has led people astray for millennia. Some have taught that Jesus was just a man, a created being. Others have denied His humanity and made Him wholly divine, and therefore was not “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15b). If Jesus was wholly divine and not a man as we are, He could not be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15a). However, the truth is that “He Himself hath suffered being tempted, [and so] He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

In John’s day gnosticism, which was a mixture of Christian and Greek philosophy, taught that Jesus was just a spirit and only appeared to have a body. Others said He was but a man, and that the Christ Spirit entered Him at baptism and left Him before He was lifted up on the cross.

Our correct understanding of the incarnation of Christ is vital, for it determines what we believe regarding the gospel and the gospel’s purpose for all who believe. Jesus is both the Son of man and the Son of God. As the Son of man, He is our example. He showed us how to live; He revealed to us the character of God and the requirements of His kingdom. As the Son of God, He gives us the power of transforming grace and the surety that His death is

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

sufficient for all who will believe, to cleanse us and free us from the guilt and shame of sin.

We are called to test the spirits and teachers, and the test is this: Do they confess that Jesus has come in the flesh? What does that mean? It is more than just acknowledging that Jesus, the Word, became a man. We must also know the purpose of the incarnation for our own lives.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-4)

The true teacher will teach that Christ came in the nature of humanity and in that nature overcame all sin, so that we who are fallen might partake of His righteousness, then the law would be fulfilled in us. Any teacher who denies this truth of the power of the gospel to change a man from sinner to saint, from rebellion to obedience, is denying Christ. The spirit of antichrist, regardless of the profession, will direct men's attention away from Christ to sacrament, tradition, and the authority of religious leaders and churches. To know that Christ came in the flesh is to know Him as our example, who as a man gave no heed to the religion and commandments of men.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Christ (the Word) becoming man teaches us the power of the gospel, “as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by

1 John Chapter 4

these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3–4).

1 John 4:4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Those who truly belong to God will overcome the teachings, the spirit, and the influence of the antichrist, which is all who neglect or set aside the will and word of God for another way. However, the ability to overcome is not inherent in us. Nor does God play favorites, assisting some and neglecting others. All who will surrender to Christ, seeking to follow His word and be conformed to His law, will be kept from evil.

The antichrist spirit coming through teachers, ministries, and churches is the religion of the carnal heart; it seeks to save people in sin and follows man’s teaching instead of the clear way of the Scriptures. This spirit of antichrist can only be overcome as we “are washed, ... sanctified, ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). Unless the power of God is in our hearts, which is lived out in a surrendered and sanctified life, we will be misled to one degree or another by the spirit of antichrist, which is the spirit that appeals to the carnal, unregenerate heart.

1 John 4:5. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

To neglect or reject God’s Word and refuse to follow His will is the spirit of antichrist. The tendency of the antichrist spirit is to have an evil heart of unbelief that speaks, teaches, and follows the principles of the world rather than, or in addition to, the Word of God.

Those who are unwilling to accept the plain, cutting truths of the Bible manifest this worldly spirit, for they are continually seeking for pleasing fables that will quiet the conscience. This worldly spirit, coming from the agents of antichrist, presents a way that is

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

less spiritual, self-denying, and humiliating than what is taught in the Word of God. Therefore, their doctrines and teachings are received with greater favor than the truth. The people degrade their intellectual and spiritual powers to serve their carnal desires.

Why do people follow these antichrist spirits, prophets, teachers, and ministries?

For the time is coming when [people] will not tolerate (endure) sound and wholesome instruction, but, having ears itching [for something pleasing and gratifying], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold. And will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions. (2 Timothy 4:3–4 AMP)

These false religious guides are of the world, and they speak of the world, and carnal, unconverted hearts hear them. These false teachers mix the Word of God with the ideas and words of men. Thus psychology comes into the church, replacing or subverting God's Word, and feel-good religion takes the place of repentance and commitment. Seeker-sensitive churches adapt themselves to the needs of the community by giving the congregation what they want. The true gospel and discipleship and the clear teaching of God's Word are set aside for drama that in most cases lessens practical faith in the Bible. In addition, worldly styles of music, and motivational talks that most often emphasize the words and ideas of men over the Word and will of God gain the upper hand.

Political correctness and lowered standards take the place of holiness of heart and purity of life. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, and so it is, for John declares, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). However, this truth is degraded into a weak sentimentalism based on feelings rather than principle and faith. God's denunciation of sin and His holy law are kept out of sight. These are but a few of the ways the false teachers, ministries, and pastors speak like the world. Those who speak like the world are un-

der the influence of the antichrist spirit, and we are warned not follow them.

“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world”

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (1 John 2:15–17)

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. (James 4:4)

God’s Word says that those who act like the world and are friends of the world are the enemies of God. When the world’s spirit, teaching, and philosophy come into the church under the guise of biblical teaching, it is still the antichrist spirit. God’s true ministers and teachers will maintain a clear distinction between the wisdom of the world and the Word of God. To do otherwise is to be under the spirit of antichrist.

It matters not what good works they do, what miracles they perform, or what tongue they speak. It matters not the popularity of the church or teacher, or the pleasing feelings we may experience. All spirits and teachers and religious leaders must be tested by a “thus saith the Lord.” “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

If we follow a man, a church, or a ministry because they perform miracles and show many wonderful works and speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if they fail the test of Isaiah 8:20, we must give heed to the Word of God and not our feelings. We must stand by the Word of God or we shall be given over to strong delusion so that we believe a lie.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

1 John 4:6. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

John's words are testing truth, for they come not from John's own heart; they are the words of God coming through the apostle. He declares that those who do not accept this epistle show by this that they are not of God. This seems bold and arrogant, and it would be if the words and teachings John is setting forth were merely his own. However, John has declared, "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you" (1 John 1:5).

By our belief in and conformity to the teachings of this epistle, we can know whether we or any other teacher or prophet is of God and is speaking truth or error. We can know whether churches or ministries are promoting error or truth. John declares, "We are God's children and only the man who knows God hears our message; what we say means nothing to the man who is not himself a child of God. This gives us a ready means of distinguishing the true from the false" (1 John 4:6 Phillips). Believing and following the teachings of John shows that we are of God. To reject John's teaching is to reject the will and word of God, which is the essence of the antichrist spirit.

Friend, may you give heed to the Spirit's voice, saying, "Little children, let no man deceive you" (1 John 3:7). This can only be done to the degree that we test the spirits and our lives by the Word of God and submit our will and way to Christ.

Lesson Ten: 1 John 4:7–21

1 **John 4:7.** Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

John comes back to a recurring theme in his epistle: the love of God and its reflection in our lives as we love others. The source of love is God, and those who have been born again, having a heart and mind renewed by love, will reflect the love of God to others, a love they have known and experienced. John keeps reminding us of this need to love others because it is common for man to be religious, even zealously so, yet not really love God, which is reflected in not loving others with a kind and patient spirit.

1 John 4:8. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

If we do not love others, manifested by exercising a forgiving and kind heart, we have not known the love of the Father. For God is love, and His children will reflect the love of their Father. However, having warm feelings and acceptance of others, while we neglect or disobey God's Word and law, is not really showing love for others or God. Our love and respect of others must be born of love and respect for God; the two cannot be separated, even though we often do this. As cruel and inhumane as man often is to his fellow man, there are marked examples of apparent love.

Great works of charity and humanitarianism are good, but if the heart is estranged from God, the tainted, selfish love of men will be apparent. Men can be zealous to help others, perhaps with debt relief or poverty reduction and other such noble causes. Yet despite their great love for certain causes, they exhibit the spirit of murder through bitterness, anger, and other similar emotions toward others. This lack of love is often toward those who are not

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

so zealously affected as they are, or who appear to be indifferent toward their humanitarian project or idea.

In the next verse John shows us what love really is, for it was demonstrated in the love of God in giving us His Son to die for our sins.

1 John 4:9–11. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

The greatest demonstration of God's love was sending His Son into the world to be the sacrifice and substitute for our sins, so that we might be freed from the guilt and condemnation of eternal damnation and live in Him. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Love is not demonstrated in the fact that mankind seeks after God and claims to love Him, for mankind's love of God is only possible because of God's love shown to us and His love awakened in us. True love is demonstrated to mankind by God's love in sending His Son to be the atonement and sacrifice for our sins. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7–8). Therefore, if God has loved us this much, and if we have experienced this love for ourselves, then indeed we ought to love one another. If we neglect or reject God's gift of salvation and the demonstration of love in Christ, then our religious profession, though it be a sincere belief, is nevertheless spoiled. Only by knowing God's demonstration of love and mercy by accepting Christ can we truly love God and therefore love others.

Man, as he was created before the fall, was made to have fellowship and union with his Maker; this is the reason men are religious. However, adherence to a religion does not prove we love

1 John Chapter 4

God, though that is what we may claim. Satan, the enemy of man and God, has created myriad counterfeits that present to man ways of remembering and honoring God but in actuality forget Him, seeking God on his own terms. This is why, in the epistle of 1 John, the sacrifice of Christ for our sins is set forth as the only means of finding acceptance and peace with God. To reject Christ as the Savior of the world is to reject God, regardless of our religious profession.

The love revealed on Calvary is the motivation and force for change, and the only causative factor in mankind truly being able to love God and thereby love one another. When men appear to love others and are involved in great works of charity yet will not accept God and His Son, Jesus Christ, their good deeds are merely the manifestation of human love and interest. The love that is as broad as the universe is a heaven-born principle; man cannot generate it, for it comes only from God. Therefore, heaven's standard of love is shown by obedience to God's Word and law and by loving our neighbor as ourselves.

1 John 4:12. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

We have not seen God face to face, but God makes His love known in believers who, themselves sinners and selfish, show the love of God to others. It is not only in loving our fellow believers that we show that God dwells with us, but in loving unbelievers as well. All human beings, for the most part, love their families and closest friends, yet God's love was demonstrated by Him showing love and mercy to mankind when we were His enemies. Therefore, if God's love is in us, it will be manifested in not only loving fellow believers but also having the spirit of love and mercy and kindness toward others. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight" (Colossians 1:21-22).

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

The desire in our hearts to serve God and obey Him, through His enabling grace, is one sign of the maturing and perfecting work of God's love in our lives. It is also seen in our desire to love and help others. Since all religions talk about the brotherhood of mankind and the need to have peace and love among men, does this mean that all religions are manifestations of God? Far from it. Talking about love is easy. Only the Bible gives us a clear description of what it means to love God and others.

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37–39).

The work of God's redeeming love in our hearts calls us to the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God, which results in our being able to love our fellow man. Love for God and the resulting love for man cannot be separated.

Love is more than an emotion or an act performed in order that we may have a good feeling when we help someone. Love, as God defines it in His Word and which is to be lived out in our lives, involves our will, our mind, our heart, and our emotions. Heaven's love is more than feeling; it is a principle. Further, it is not something that man can express or generate from within himself. For true love is found only in God and can only be lived out if God is loved with all the heart, mind, and soul, which is the result of His love changing our lives. Apart from the life-changing love of God in our hearts, we cannot truly love. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, shows us the difference between the love of men and the love of God.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

1 John Chapter 4

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43–48)

1 John 4:13. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

We can know we are God's children by His Spirit that dwells in us. The Spirit leads us to love one another, but many appear not to do that, though they claim to love God. Still others seem to be loving and accepting of men, yet is often done to the point of disobeying God. Are there other manifestations of the Spirit besides loving others that testify that we are truly of God?

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. (Acts 5:32)

As the Spirit draws us to Christ and helps us recognize our condition as sinners this requires a choice on our part as to whether we will accept the gift of Christ's salvation, yielding to the convicting work on our hearts. This is the first step of obedience. As we continue to yield to God, more of the Spirit will be given to us.

The Spirit prompts us and helps us to obey. There can be no work of the Spirit in our lives without a yielding of our will and subsequent obedience to God. So all our talk of loving others and being filled with the Spirit is of no value if there is not "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6).

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. (John 15:26)

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself;

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 16:13)

Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost. (Titus 3:5)

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Romans 8:3–6)

The Holy Spirit in us empowers us to live by the righteous law of God, to live a spiritual life, whose interest is in serving God and following His will, leading us to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10).

There are people who profess religion and seem to manifest love to others, but if these other aspects of the Spirit are lacking, they are not of God. For the true Spirit of grace comes “teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12). Yet those who appear to love others sometimes de-emphasize the gospel and discipleship and focus on a social gospel of charity and good feelings, which leaves the sinner in his sins. Let it be understood: Loving God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and truly loving others, are both part of the Spirit-filled life. Only those who have this experience can know that Christ abides with us by the Spirit He has given us.

1 John 4:14–15. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

1 John Chapter 4

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

John saw Christ in person and believed He was the Son of God and was forgiven of his sins and transformed by His grace. We, like John, are drawn by the Spirit and the testimony of God's Word, declaring that Jesus is the Savior of the world. In John's day, when it was often dangerous to profess Christ, this profession was in itself evidence that the faith and belief were genuine. Today, however, many can profess Christ but not be His true disciples. Obedience to God's law and His Word shows whether we really love God. "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (1 John 3:7). Confessing Christ is more than a profession, more than adherence to a religious philosophy. To confess Christ is to receive the living Christ into our lives, leading us to love and obey Him.

1 John 4:16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

We can know God's love by the evidence of His Word, the testimony of the Spirit's conviction upon our conscience, and the change wrought in our lives as we turn to God as Father, for it is not in the heart of the natural man to love God. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:10–11). When a person comes to know God's love, and as the heart surrenders and yields to His drawing love, living in the presence of God begins. We dwell by faith in heavenly places, and the Father dwells in us through the Spirit He has given us. (See Ephesians 2:4–6.)

1 John 4:17–18. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

So our love for him grows more and more, filling us with complete confidence for the day when he shall judge all men—for we realize that our life in this world is actually his life lived in us. (1 John 4:17 Phillips)

When the true love of God is in our hearts, it will lead us to fear God and give Him glory. For to fear God is to love, reverence, and obey Him. This developing maturity of love for God gives us boldness, for our assurance is in knowing that “if God be for us, who can be against us?” For if He “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:31–34).

God’s promises and love, and our knowledge of this love, give us the boldness to stand before Him in the judgment, for we stand in love. Spiritually naked and poor as we are in God’s sight, we can be washed by the “blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, [and] purged your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14). Therefore, our boldness and our confidence in the judgment are not of ourselves, nor in feel-good religion or misguided feelings or vain hope. It is in having Christ infilling us, washing us, and enabling us to stand before Him in love.

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

Loving God is not a superstitious quirk of the mind from evolutions past. Neither is it simply a cultural phenomenon because we grew up in a religious society or country or home. No, we can only truly love God because “He first loved us.” In addition, mankind’s professed love for God is shallow and ill defined at best unless “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,” leading us to be “justified by faith, [as] we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”

(Romans 5:5, 1). If we deny or neglect or disbelieve God's greatest demonstration of love through Christ's death at Calvary, in which He purposed to save us and by which He seeks to show us His love and thereby awaken love in us, we cannot truly love God regardless of our religious profession.

The fact that men seek after and claim to love God is evidence that God exists. However, it is not enough for men to say they love God, for this does not prove they know the true God or actually love Him. For without genuine faith "it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Love for God defined

Virtually all of mankind is religious, or at least professes religion. Approximately 1.1 billion people of the world's population is Moslem; another approximately 1 billion are Catholic; and there are more than 800 million Hindus. Add to this more than a billion people who profess to be Christians, the various Buddhist sects, the New Age adherents, etc., and it is obvious that man has an active spiritual nature. However, it is also obvious that the different beliefs cannot all be true. All these religions would agree that mankind needs peace, love, and harmony, and they generally believe that God (as they understand Him to be) is a being or a force of love. Therefore, all these religious adherents claim to love God. Can this be true?

What does it mean to love God? We have already learned we only love God because He loves us. Further, the Holy Bible can help us to know if we really love God or not.

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. (Mark 12:30)

We find in this verse that loving God is not a profession, but a surrender of the entire life to Him.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments. (Daniel 9:4)

Without obedience, our professed love for God is fruitless and dead. Further, without the love of God in our hearts there can be no true obedience to Him.

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Luke 16:13)

To love God truly leaves no middle ground, for either our heart, mind, and strength will be taken up with service to God or they will serve a different master. With some it is money, reputation, sensual indulgence, religion, or entertainment that takes their service away from God. To truly love God is a surrender of the whole man, for we cannot serve two masters.

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. (John 8:42)

Jesus said of the professed worshippers in His day that if they would not believe in Him, they did not really love God. This is still true today. Mankind's professed love for God is warped if it does not perceive and understand the love of God in Christ. Jesus demonstrated the love and character of the Father in His life and teaching, and He has shown us the love of the Father in dying for our sins. Therefore, truly loving God will lead to acceptance and love of Jesus as Savior and Lord.

And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways,

1 John Chapter 4

and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. (Deuteronomy 10:12)

What was true of ancient Israel is true for all today who claim to love God. To love God is to fear Him. Love and respect for God lead us to strive for obedience because of our recognition of His goodness.

To love God means to walk in all His ways, as revealed throughout Scripture. Walking in God's ways means we no longer follow our own way nor the principles of the world around us, which are contrary to God.

To love Him is to have confidence in Him as our Father and friend, turning to Him with all our problems and sorrows and praise.

Loving God means "to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This means rendering to God all that He requires. This is not an arbitrary command of God; rather, obedience is for our own good. Loving God means performing our service with all our heart, the whole of our affections, and with all our soul, our will, our understanding.

The verses cited above reveal that most of the religious people who claim to believe in and love God are sadly mistaken.

1 John 4:20–21. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

It seems obvious that the lover of God should also love his fellow man. Yet man, in his religious zeal and mistaken understanding, has often sought to show his love for God by persecuting or at least despising others who are different or not in agreement with his views of God and duty. If "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16) to die for us, then the love of God in us will make our hearts kind and forgiving. For us to say we

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

love God, whom we only see by faith, while not loving our fellow man, whom we do see, is a lie and deception of the greatest sort.

John reveals those who are liars in God's sight

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. (1 John 1:6)

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

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:4)

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:21–22)

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (1 John 3:7)

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 John 4:20)

Examine well, my friend, your religious profession. Are you living a lie or loving the truth? It is bad enough when our religious profession is a lie, as we reject or neglect God's word to us. What is worse is that there are those who, by their actions or words and even religious practice, in essence call God a liar.

Making God a liar

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:10)

1 John Chapter 4

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (1 John 5:10)

To disbelieve, neglect, or despise God's assessment of our condition—that we are sinners doomed to death unless cleansed by the merits of Christ, the only door to salvation—is to call God a liar. Anyone who does not recognize his sinful condition is declaring that God is a liar. All the pomp, ceremony, and ritual of man's religion, his zealous works and pilgrimages, will accomplish nothing. Heaven reveals but one way to God and salvation; therefore, there is only one inescapable conclusion: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11–12).

Chapter Five

Lesson Eleven: 1 John 5:1–13

1 John 5:1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Many people have the idea that as long as they make a profession of Christ, they are born again. Or if they say, “I believe in God,” that is sufficient for acceptance with Him. However, the key is in believing, and this belief must be centered on Christ, the Messiah and Savior of the world.

What does it mean to believe, and what are we to believe? This word means “to entrust (especially one’s spiritual well-being) to Christ.”¹

Trust involves knowing something about the one on whom trust is focused. This is why we are directed to the Word of God, “for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Faith and believing go hand in hand.

Let us note the meaning of faith.

In theology, the assent of the mind or understanding to the truth of what God has revealed. Simple belief in the Scriptures, of the being and perfection of God, and the existence, character and doctrines of Christ, founded on the testimony of the sacred writers. This is called historical or speculative faith; a faith little distinguished from the belief of the existence and achievements of Alexander or of Caesar.

Evangelical, justifying or saving faith, is the assent of the mind to the truth of Divine revelation, on the authority

1 John Chapter 5

of God's testimony, accompanied with a cordial assent of the will or approbation of the heart; an entire confidence or trust in God's character and declarations, and in the character and doctrines of Christ, with an unreserved surrender of the will to His guidance, and dependence on His merits for salvation ... That firm belief in God's testimony, and of the truth of the gospel, which influences the will, and leads to an entire reliance on Christ for salvation.²

The definition of *believe* is very similar to the meaning of the word *faith*. "To believe on is to trust, to place full confidence in, to rest upon with faith. It is an assent of the mind, a yielding of the will and affections, accompanied with a humble reliance on Christ for salvation."³

To believe is to be born again, renewed by the Holy Ghost. This comes about because of God's love in search of us, and His Holy Spirit reproving us of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment. (See John 16:8.) By the testimony of Scripture, the conviction of the Spirit upon our hearts, and a conscience awakened to the requirements and love and mercy of God, "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4). We are born again as we entrust our entire lives to Christ as the sole means of our salvation. This leads us to yield our will to God and His Word, making Christ Lord and Savior. As we come to know the love of God, it will deepen, grow, and mature. We, in turn, having known the love of God, will love others who are of the same family, those who also are born from above.

1 John 5:2-3. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

The evidence that we truly love God's children is that we love God and are obedient to His commandments. Why would this be?

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:8–10)

The moral law shows us what it means to truly love God and man, for God's love and His law reach into our thoughts, motives, and actions, thereby providing a standard that we might know if we really have the love of God in our heart. Some mistakenly read the above verses in Romans and believe love does away with the law. Far from it. Only when God's love is experienced can we truly obey Him. Further, human love is shallow and selfish, and the law of God shows us what it means to truly love others.

For example, a man may claim to love his wife, and he may be faithful and kind toward her, yet he takes pleasure in pornography. The moral law shows us this is the sin of adultery. This man does not really love God, and his love for his wife is tainted by human selfishness.

I might claim that I love my best friend, and we might get along fabulously. It seems there is nothing we would not do for each other. But if I feel covetous or jealous over the success my friend has achieved in some area of life, and if I start thinking it's unfair that I have not obtained the same success as my friend, that is sin according to the moral law of God. This shows that my love for my friend is tainted and selfish, and I am sinning against God when I have those thoughts.

The law lived is love demonstrated, for it provides us a standard by which we can determine if we really love God and others.

For the true child of God, obedience to the commandments of God is not grievous, irksome, burdensome, or oppressive. For if we have been born anew, we can truly say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).

1 John Chapter 5

1 John 5:4-5. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

When we are born again, not only is a love awakened in our heart toward God and toward His children, we are also motivated to overcome the world. We read in 1 John 2:15-17 a description of the world. The lusts and pleasures of the world are pride and sin. But all of that will pass away, destroyed by fire, leaving only those who do the will of God.

Once we are born again, our lives become a constant war against the principles and ways of the world. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

The result of being born again is that we “no longer ... live the rest of [our] ... time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (1 Peter 4:2). Overcoming the world is to be our victory by faith. It is the call of everyone who “is born of God” and truly believes in Jesus.

Despite all the profession of our love for Jesus, when believers and churches adopt the music, lifestyle, psychology, feel-good religion, and marketing techniques of the world, Jesus is not there. For whenever faith in Jesus is active in the life of a believer or church, overcoming the attitudes, spirit, and ways of the world will be experienced and lived, for it cannot be otherwise.

1 John 5:6. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Jesus came to this earth to save mankind. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus began His ministry when the Holy Spirit anointed Him at His baptism in the river Jordan. This event marked the start of His public work. This is the water spoken of in verse six.

Jesus’ whole life pointed to one great final event, His death on Calvary, “when thou [God] shalt make His soul an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:10). This is the blood spoken of in verse six.

These two great events—His anointing by the Holy Spirit and baptism at the start of His ministry, and His death as man’s substitute and sacrifice at the end of His ministry—testify that He is Lord and Savior.

The Holy Spirit seeks to draw our attention to our sinfulness and need of a Savior. The Spirit bears witness to Christ, the Anointed One, He who is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

1 John 5:7–8. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The Bible says, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1). God declared the identity of His Son on the mount of transfiguration. “And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him” (Mark 9:7). At Christ’s baptism, the Spirit’s coming upon Him and the voice of God gave another testimony. “And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:10–11).

Jesus, the Word of God, also testifies, “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father” (John 16:28).

1 John Chapter 5

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. (John 8:12–18)

The Holy Spirit also testifies that Jesus is Lord. “The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me” (John 15:26). The Spirit testifies of Christ as Savior, for “He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8–11). The Spirit does His work of convincing our conscience so that we might recognize Jesus as Savior and, empowered by the spirit of transforming love, make Jesus our Lord. The Spirit, as Christ’s witness, does “not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:13–14). The Father, the Word, and the Spirit all testify that Jesus is the Savior of men.

Jesus’ public anointing and baptism at the start of His ministry (the water), and His death upon Calvary (the blood), and the Holy Spirit all testify of Christ. But these three on earth are not the only witnesses. There are others. “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). The Bible itself testifies of Jesus, foretelling events many centuries before that concerned His life and ministry.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Luke testifies, “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen: To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:1–3).

The apostle Paul declares, “He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:5–8).

1 John 5:9–12. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

If we can believe the witness of men regarding Christ, the Savior of the world, the witness and testimony of God is far greater. For he who believes in Christ has a witness and evidence within himself. How is it that we can believe ourselves when humanity is prone to self-deception and error? It is this: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:15–17).

For God to become our Father requires our surrender and a change of the natural heart. For we have been “made free from sin,

1 John Chapter 5

and become servants to God,” and we have “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:22).

The witness of God is made known in sending Jesus to be the Savior of the world, and in the Holy Spirit’s work of wooing and drawing the heart of man. There is also the witness in ourselves as we individually experience the redeeming love of God, as love for God is awakened in our hearts, which leads us to serve Him and seek to please Him. The witness in ourselves is the evidence of a transformed life that is ever pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). The witness in ourselves brings forth a change, a transformation of life in motive, thoughts, and actions, not only a profession.

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. (Titus 3:3–6)

The testimony of God is this, that He “hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11–12). This is a solemn yet wonderful declaration. This tells us religion is not the way to God, neither is sincerity or good works or an upright life. No, eternal life is not inherent in the nature of man or obtained by reincarnation or time spent in purgatory. Eternal life has one source alone, which is Christ. This life is granted to us when we believe in our hearts that Christ is our Savior who died for us, to pay the penalty of our sins and to free us from guilt and condemnation. The belief that saves leads to surrender of heart and life, and to an utter dependence and trust in Christ as Savior and King.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Through the mystery of redeeming love, Christ changes us from sinner to saint, from being estranged from the life of God to becoming a servant and friend of God. This is the evidence and witness within ourselves when we love God and keep His commandments, loving God and loving others. A mere profession is not enough. To have the Son is to have a life free from guilt and condemnation, to live a life of love and service. For we are to be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” In this daily experience of faith and love, we are to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:9–10).

It is treason and a betrayal of sacred trust when we believe “not the record that God gave of His Son” (1 John 5:10). It is a lie for any believer or Christian leader or teacher to accept the non-Christian religions as having equal validity before God, claiming that Christ is but one of many ways to God. This idea is becoming more prevalent as time goes on, and it is an evidence of the fact that we are in the “latter times [when] some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1).

1 John 5:13. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

All the religious people of this world think they have eternal life, or at least they hope so. John is saying that eternal life comes only by believing in Christ. Further, he states that we “may know [we] have eternal life.” How can we know for sure? The knowledge that we have eternal life is not in what we see or feel; it is by the evidence of God’s Word and the evidence of a transformed life as we “are washed, ... sanctified, ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Have you surrendered your heart and life to the drawing of God’s Spirit? Have you turned your life over to Christ as Lord and Savior? If you have, you can know you have eternal life based on

1 John Chapter 5

the evidence and testimony of God's Word and the change of heart and attitude and mind that He has and is working out in you.

Our hope is not in what we think but in the declaration of Scripture. Let us read the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5 as He speaks of the blessings for those who have been drawn by His Spirit and transformed by His grace. Let us not seek to claim the promises alone, for they are only to those who have a character made worthy by Christ. Only in having a transformed character and a renewed life made such by Christ can we "know we have eternal life."

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3-10)

Let us look at one more way we can know we have eternal life. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

Christ became man, yet in His incarnation He was "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Now by faith in Him we are to "be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). By virtue of our union with Christ, we are to come forth from the grave, as His life has become ours. Through the Spirit and through His word Christ dwells in us, and the Spirit of God received into the heart by faith is the beginning of eternal life.

The "spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is the power of the resurrection now, revealed in changed hearts and lives, leading to the res-

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

urrection from the grave in the future. Christ by His Spirit sets us “free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). The dominion of evil in our lives is broken, and by faith we can conquer sin.

As we open our hearts to the Spirit of Christ, we can become partakers of resurrection power even now, for it is manifested in a transformed life, loving and serving God. This life in the Spirit is the earnest or down payment, the evidence of eternal life abiding in us. Finally, the testimony of God’s Word to us says we have eternal life, and this life is in His Son, and the evidence “standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:19).

I pray, my friend, that you may know the witness in your own life of the love of God, the witness of the Spirit in convicting and transforming you. I pray that you may know the witness of Christ as Savior and Lord, the witness of His word, and the witness of a life drawn out to God and transformed by His love. I pray you may have Christ and eternal life today. Amen.

Endnotes:

1. James Strong LL.D., S.T. D., *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987).
2. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*. (San Francisco, California: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967).
3. Ibid.

Lesson Twelve: 1 John 5:14–21

1 **John 5:14–15.** And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Our confidence is “in Him.” It cannot be in ourselves, what we have done, what our religious attainments may be. Our confidence must be in God and His Word. Therefore, with confidence in God’s love and mercy and His all-knowing wisdom, we can know He hears our prayers and understands the thoughts of our hearts. If we seek to know God’s will as revealed in Scripture and live by His will, we will also pray according to His will and not our own. Therefore, “we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.” Because of our knowledge of God’s love, we know He will answer us according to what is best for us. This confidence gives us a joy and comfort, knowing that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

People throughout the world pray regardless of the type of spirituality they follow. It seems mankind, to some degree, senses its frailty and thus prays to a power outside itself. Yet not all prayers are according to the will and purpose of God. In fact, God does not recognize the prayers of most people, for they pray amiss. People pray to gods and lords other than the Lord Jehovah. They pray according to their desires and often approach God with a wish list. To pray aright is to be convicted of the Spirit of our sinfulness, leading us to pray for pardon and acceptance with God. In addition, the Spirit leads us to the Word of God, the Holy Bible, where we learn how and for what we should pray. The confidence some exhibit in their prayer lives is unfounded and merely a vain hope if they do not pray according to the will and word of God.

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

Jesus exposed the errors of the religious people of His day who were praying earnestly but wrongly. Because these errors are still common today, let us note them here.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. (Matthew 6:5–7)

When we pray to be seen by men so that we might show our piety and devotion, we are praying wrongly. Repetitious and prepared phrases do not honor God, for our prayers should be like the petitions of a child, opening our hearts to God as Father and friend. We should come to God telling Him our needs, our joys, our sorrows, and offering Him our thanks and praise. This must come from the heart. We should not pray the same things over and over again, or offer memorized prayers. All of this is to pray wrongly, and any confidence we have in this sort of prayer is misplaced.

Jesus taught us the true attitude in prayer in the following verses.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9–13)

1 John 5:16–17. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life

1 John Chapter 5

for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

If any of you should see his brother committing a sin (I don't mean deliberately turning his back on God and embracing evil), he should pray to God for him and secure fresh life for the sinner. It is possible to commit sin that is a deliberate embracing of evil and that leads to spiritual death—that is not the sort of sin I have in mind when I recommend prayer for the sinner. Every failure to obey God's laws is sin, of course, but there is a sin that does not preclude repentance and forgiveness. (1 John 5:16–17 Phillips)

We must acknowledge our own weaknesses and realize that we are saved solely by the grace of God. When we see a fellow believer make a mistake, we are not to talk about it to others and castigate him. Rather, we are to pray to God that He would help that person, sending His Holy Spirit to reprove him and enable him to overcome.

Praying for the needs of others is one type of prayer that is according to God's will. Where appropriate, we can offer counsel and admonition ourselves. But if a professed believer is purposefully walking away from the Lord, not giving heed to God's Spirit or the counsel of godly and concerned believers, there comes a time to just let him be. However, John is not speaking of that, but rather the weakness and frailty of all men. We who are mature in Christ ought to be praying and helping fellow believers who make mistakes. Our attitude should be that taught by the apostle Paul. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

What is the sin that is "not unto death?" It is simply the sin that is repented of. For "the wages of sin is death." All sin therefore is grievous in God's sight, but willfully sinning against the truth we know and going against the voice of conscience is more dangerous,

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

for it will eventually lead us to accept sin and ignore God's convicting voice. Therefore, the only sin that is "not unto death" is the sin, whether big or small in our eyes, that is repented of and forsaken by the grace of God.

In closing this epistle, there are three things John declares we must know and experience in reality as children of God. If this is not what we are striving for, we need to go back to the beginning. We must "confess our sins," believing that God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Let us not think that we are okay and live satisfied with our current spiritual attainments, for to do so is to "say that we have not sinned." When we begin to think that, being unwilling to repent or not recognizing our errors and faults, "we make Him [God] a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). It is God's purpose and John's hope that we would know the next few verses, not just by an intellectual assent but as a heart experience. May God help us to have this hope and experience.

"We know"

1 John 5:18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

We know [absolutely] that anyone born of God does not [deliberately and knowingly] practice committing sin, but the One Who was begotten of God carefully watches over and protects him [Christ's divine presence within him preserves him against the evil], and the wicked one does not lay hold (get a grip) on him or touch [him].
(1 John 5:18 AMP)

We are to know and perceive intellectually, and we are to know and experience in our lives, God's will for us. The life we are to live does not include indulging in sin. Though we love the Lord, we may fail God in some way or another at times. But if we really love God, it must not be our willful and deliberate choice to go contrary to Him.

1 John Chapter 5

Some might protest here and say, “I love the Lord, but you know the weakness of men. We cannot overcome completely.” Well, that may be our view. But the Word of God says that if we walk with Christ, He will enable us to overcome. And if we do fail, we must not offer excuses. Rather, in response to the reproving voice of conscience enlightened by the Spirit, there will be deep and earnest repentance for hurting our friend, our Father, and our God.

But let us not concentrate on ourselves, for while the verse sets forth the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, notice where the victory is: It is in Christ. Jesus keeps us and watches over us as we submit to Him. So the victory is in our submission to Christ.

We cannot resist the wicked one by ourselves; neither can we overcome sin by ourselves. The key is Christ’s divine presence in our lives, He who is the begotten of God. He enables us to recognize our weakness and submit our will in love to Him. That is where the victory lies.

Not only does Christ keep us, but 1 John 1:18 declares that he who is begotten of God, the believer who is born again, is to keep himself. In other words, there is a work of the will and a subsequent action for us to engage in. This call to keep ourselves is not only John’s teaching but is an admonition of Scripture as noted in the verses below.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:2–3)

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (Luke 13:24)

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for mas-

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

teries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. (2 Timothy 2:3–5)

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. (1 Corinthians 9:24–27)

“We know”

1 John 5:19. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

We know that we are children of God and that all the rest of the world around us is under Satan’s power and control. (1 John 5:19 TLB)

John here makes a distinction between those who know “we are of God” and the rest of the “world that lieth in wickedness.” There is to be a clear distinction between God’s children and the “children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). We learned in 1 John 2:15–17 that we are not to love or be drawn toward the lusts and prideful ways of the world, having admiration and affection for the world, for it is ultimately to pass away, and only those who do God’s will shall abide forever. We must recognize that the world’s wickedness and lost condition does not make us better. This knowledge should not cause us to stand aloof from the world in spiritual pride. Rather, we are under an obligation of love to minister to the lost world, while keeping separate from its prideful ways, its lusts, and its ungodly principles.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

1 John Chapter 5

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:17–20)

To be children of God means separating from the evil of our own hearts and from the world around us, for Christ “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Galatians 1:4).

By virtue of our calling as Christians and through Christ, we are delivered from the evil of this world. We are to be, to a world lying in wickedness, “ambassadors for Christ.” We are to let the light of God’s love and mercy shine out in our lives, and we are to live the principles of God’s Word. For we are called to “be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15).

Knowing we are of God

How shall we know that we are “of God”? We can recognize and even shun the evil of the world, but does that prove we are “of God”? Is being part of a church or making a Christian profession prove we are “of God”? As in all things we must examine our lives and our profession by the Bible. Therefore let us hear God’s word to us through John so that we might truly know we are of God.

- **The experience of the true children:** “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

- **The experience of the false professor:** “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” (1 John 1:6)
- **The experience of the true children:** “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” (1 John 2:3)
- **The experience of the false professor:** “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” (1 John 2:4)
- **The experience of the true children:** “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” (1 John 2:5)
- **The experience of the false professor:** “And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.” “I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.” (John 5:38; 8:37)
- **The experience of the true children:** “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.” (1 John 2:10)
- **The experience of the false professor:** “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.” (1 John 2:9, 11)
- **The experience of the true children:** “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you,

1 John Chapter 5

young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” (1 John 2:12–14)

- **The experience of the false professor:** “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” (1 John 3:10)
- **The experience of the true children:** “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:16–17)
- **The experience of the false professor:** “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15)

“We know”

1 John 5:20. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

And we [have seen and] know [positively] that the Son of God has [actually] come to this world and has given us understanding and insight [progressively] to perceive (recognize) and come to know better and more clearly Him Who is true; and we are in Him Who is true—in His Son Jesus Christ (the Messiah). This [Man] is the true God and Life eternal. (1 John 5:20 AMP)

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

John, at the beginning of this epistle, declared, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Fellowship with Christ is the focus of John’s letter; to be more precise, God’s letter to us through John. We are invited to know Christ, not merely as a factual figure of history but as our personal Savior. The fact that the hearts of men the world over are continually drawn to Christ is evidence that indeed God “hath given us an understanding” of our need of a Savior, which is Christ, the Son of God.

Our knowledge of Christ is to grow, broaden, and deepen. We are to know Christ as the Son of man, our example and teacher, He who has shown us the Father’s love. We are to know Christ as the divine Son of God in whom our hope of eternal life rests. We are to know and love Christ and to pray “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:16–19).

To know and love God truly is to know and love His Son. For to deny the Son of God is to deny God. (See 1 John 2:23.) Therefore, the God of the Holy Bible, whom Jesus has revealed to us in His life on this earth, is the true God. Only through His Son can we have eternal life. This is what we must know with all certainty, intellectually and from the heart. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

1 John 5:21. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.
Amen.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols (false gods)—
[from anything and everything that would occupy the
place in your heart due to God, from any sort of substitute

1 John Chapter 5

for Him that would take first place in your life]. *Amen (so let it be)*. (1 John 5:21 AMP)

John's last admonition to us as children of God is that we keep ourselves from idols. This means we are to separate ourselves from, to be on guard, and to avoid anything that would compromise our faith or hinder our full and total commitment to God. John wrote to a church that was surrounded by the pagan idolatry of the Roman Empire. Pagan influences and worldly principles were so pervasive that even faithful believers in Christ were admonished to keep up a constant warfare against it in their hearts by ever maintaining their hope and trust in Christ, lest the spirit of the age lessen their love and obedience for God and His word.

Christians today, scattered throughout the world, are still surrounded by pagan idolatry of one sort or another. Materialism, covetousness, worldly education, and philosophy are but some of today's idols. Such idols often lead to disbelief, skepticism, and doubt regarding the existence of God and the validity of His Word. In John's day and in ours, we are counseled to keep up a constant warfare against the spirit of the age around us, a spirit that offers many substitutes to take the place of Christ as our hope and trust and priority in life.

Friends, the human heart (including yours and mine) is prone to idolatry. We may not bow before idols of gold and silver, but there are many idols in the world, and we must avoid them at all costs. John's plea is the warning of His Master and ours.

Let us close our study with the warnings of our Lord and King, our Guide and Companion, who has promised us, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these

Lesson of Salvation from the Epistle of 1 John

things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21:34-36)

The letter of 1 John is the voice of God speaking to us, inviting us to know Him. It is God's voice of warning and entreaty. May you, my friend, choose to give heed to the voice of love speaking to your heart. I pray you may know Christ, who is eternal life. This is my hope and prayer for you and the purpose for this book. Amen.

