

# LETTERS OF THE APOSTLE JOHN

## Part 2

### I John 2:28 – I John 5:3

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Right brethren, last week we began what is likely to be a fairly brief study of the letters of the Apostle John. It will be brief because the books are brief. The first letter has only five chapters, the next two letters one apiece. We might well conclude the entire series next week, at a push, or maybe the week after.

From last week's study you will recollect that John wrote these letters somewhere towards the end of his life, so he may have been in his nineties or maybe coming towards one hundred. He was a very wise man, and had been with John the Baptist as one of his disciples, and had moved across to the Lord Jesus when He appeared on the scene. John was very personally close to the Lord Jesus. John continued a long time, and he saw many changes in the church, and he saw much deception.

In chapter one you will recollect that John starts off by talking about how he was an eyewitness of *the Word*. He had seen the Word, he had heard the Word, and he had even touched the Word. So that when John spoke it was not hearsay, it was not some book that he had read somewhere, but he literally had seen, and physically touched, the Lord Jesus, and his word was therefore valuable.

John said that we all fellowship with each other, and with the Lord Jesus Christ and with the Father. He showed us that fellowship means more than just a relationship. A father and a son can be related because the father sires the son, but *their fellowship* might be non-existent. In some families they may have a big bust up and they may never speak to one another for decades, or until one dies. So you can be *related* and yet have very poor *fellowship*. But what John writes is that you and I should have fellowship and intimate relationship with our Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what John wanted, and that is what the Father looks for, and that is

what the Lord Jesus came for, so that you and I could be friends — family — with the Father. It is not just a question of having technical knowledge of certain doctrines and knowing a bit more than the neighbor next door. What the Father wants is family who are close to Him, and they talk to Him, and they enjoy His company, and His fellowship. John was writing all of this that our joy might be full.

We spent some time last week just recognizing that the scriptures talked about joy. Jesus said, “My joy I leave with you.” And John wrote that our joy might be full. The fruits of the spirit are love and joy, and if we are not joyful in our lives then there is some action required. Therefore if you look around at your life, if you look in the mirror and you find that you are a misery guts, rather than being full of joy, then action is required!

Then we saw that the apostle John tried to use a little simple picture to point out a great truth, that God is light, and the opposite is dark. Light is the good side. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world”. It says that God is light and in Him is no dark. So if you and I are going to fellowship with the Father and the Lord Jesus, then we should be walking in the light. The scriptures will tell us how to walk in the light.

There are scriptures that talk about how "the entrance Your words (the scriptures) give light." *“Your Word is a lamp unto my path.” “The path of the just is as a shining light that shines more and more into the perfect day.”* And so you and I are a people who, if we want to fellowship with the Father, need to be walking, that is to say living and having a lifestyle that is in the light.

The opposite is the dark, and the darkness is where you will find Satan. You and I should not be wandering around aimlessly in the dark. *“The way of the wicked is as darkness and they know not at what they stumble.”* They cannot see, and they fall over things, and this is not a good place to be. So you and I should be walking in the light, and the scriptures tell us how to walk in the light, and we should know that sin brings us into the dark. Sin is the transgression of the law, as we will see later today. But sin brings us into the dark. The wages of sin is death, but we know that the Lord Jesus has died and has paid the penalty of our sins.

In chapter 2, John brings out that we should not treat sin lightly just because we have the ability to be forgiven if we confess our sins. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, but that does not mean that you can treat sin casually, just because it is easy to be forgiven. We said last week

when you sin run *to* God do not run *from* Him. But God has made provision; He wants us to continue that fellowship, so He has given Jesus as a propitiation (that horrible *religious* word!) meaning a "gift that renders favorable." Jesus is our advocate and He intercedes and represents us, so by all means run to God, and call for an advocate when we sin, but do not treat sin lightly.

And then of course, John got very emphatic that we must *keep the Commandments*.

**I John 2:3** Now by this we know that we know Him, *IF we keep His commandments*.

Here is one way of seeing whether or not we fellowship in the light, where God is. We can definitely be sure that we know Him IF we keep His commandments.

**I John 2:4** He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

I am sure that John is a kind, elderly man, but he is being blunt here because this is necessary truth. If we say, 'I know the Lord Jesus, I am a Christian', but actually we are not doing very much in terms of keeping the Commandments, then actually we are *a liar!*

**I John 2:5-6** But whoever *keeps His word*, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to *walk just as He walked*.

So, how Jesus walked, let us do likewise. As we mentioned last week, the book by Charles Sheldon, "In His Steps," is about a group of people in a little town somewhere in America that were challenged to consider "What would Jesus do?" And they should endeavor to do likewise. I think that they found it quite a challenge, as you and I would do as well. But, you and I must copy the example of Jesus.

We heard about the New Commandment. The Old Commandment was 'Love your neighbor as yourself', and the New Commandment is 'Love your neighbor *as I have loved you*'. This is a higher standard, because Jesus said, 'I am setting an example — as I have loved you, you are to love one another'.

Then John continues that we should not love the world, not love man's civilization, man's society, man's order, or organization. Because the lust of the flesh, the things that appeal to our

senses, the lust of eyes, things that look good, and the pride of life, that boasting, that vain glory, about our accomplishments, that is all going to pass away one day, it is very temporary. So, do not do what Eve did, look at that tree and lust after the fruit because it looked good, and would make her wise, and fulfill her desire to be vain. She made a mistake, and you and I are not supposed to do that. You and I should be very careful as to what it is that appeals to us. What drives us, is it the lust of flesh and the eyes, and the pride of life? Are we attracted towards the dark side? Is the dark side where we think that we would be more fulfilled? Or, do we shun the dark side, and pursue and move towards the light, because that is where God is, and He who does the will of God abides forever? But if we are on the dark side where Satan is, and Satan's guard dogs are, then you and I stand every chance of losing out.

**I John 2:18** Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

So, who are these many antichrists? Antichrist in the Greek means 'against Christ,' or *in opposition* to the Lord Jesus or His teachings, or perhaps *in substitution* of the real Jesus Christ.

**I John 2:19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

So these antichrists, as John refers to them, were previously associates. I was going to say 'members' of the church, but it says that they were *not of us*, so like the parable of the wheat and the tares. Here were men and women who had associated and assembled with believers but they went out from us, and they were *not of us*.

I guess, reading between the lines, that those who have gone out are trying very hard to get the rest out. I have seen that somewhat in the past, that people who have left the truth might well come back and try to bring others out to see "the light" as they now see the light. John is not having that, these people were not part of the true body; they had left and were trying hard to get some more out, and so John says that these are antichrists, and they are in opposition to what Jesus Christ is doing.

**I John 2:20** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

As we saw last week, the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth that leads us into all truth. So John says that we should be able to figure this out. You have God's Spirit, that is the anointing upon you, and the Spirit of truth amazingly will lead you into truth. So you should not be easily fooled.

**I John 2:21-22** I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

In fact back in these days there were many who denied that the Father had a Son Jesus Christ. As far as they were concerned there was only one God, one being, God the Father and that is it, end of story. And when Jesus claimed to be the Son of the Father, and He claimed to have been God, they went bananas and tried to run Jesus off hills, tried to stone Him, and of course finally one of the things that got Jesus arrested and crucified, was the claim that He made, 'I was with the Father, I am part of the God family'. People who deny that there is a Father and a Son, a God the Father and Logos, are the antichrist.

**I John 2:23-25** Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us — eternal life.

And that is what you and I are aiming for, eternal life — which *is more* than just a long life. Satan has had a long life, we do not know how long that he has been around, whether it is a few tens of thousands of years, a bit less, or whether it is millions or billions of years. Satan's life has been a long life — of misery, hatred, jealousy, envy, and darkness. None of us would want that. One of the reasons that Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden was to prevent them getting back to the Tree of Life. If they would have eaten from the Tree of Life they would have presumably lived forever, or for a very long time, in anguish, pain and suffering.

But you and I are promised eternal life, meaning life at the very highest — joyful, exciting, rewarding, with fantastic relationships, new challenges, forever and ever and ever. We would not want to give that up for anything.

**I John 2:26** These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.

I think those that went out had been sniffing around trying to get more to join them, because John says that people are trying to deceive you. You should not be deceived because you have the spirit of truth in you.

**I John 2:27** But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

There have books written and movies made about the Antichrist. They tend to apply that term to some religious world leader in the end times, similar to the false prophet or the beast. I suppose you can do that, but John does not seem to be using the term in a prophetic sense, and he is just referring to those who have gone out from the church and constituting *many* antichrists. These are people who reject Jesus Christ and the Father.

**I John 2:28** And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

That is obviously good advice. To abide means to continue, to remain, it means do not give up, and it means endure unto the end.

You and I will appear before Christ at some stage, and when we do we do not want to have our head hanging down staring at our little tootsies, in embarrassment and shame at the way that we blew it. But if we are walking in the light, and we are fellowshiping with the Father and the Son, then we can be confident, and look forward to Christ's return and be excited about what might be coming our way in terms of our reward.

**I John 2:29** If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

A note about the word 'born,' in the letters of John at least. In I John the word 'born' appears all over the place and it has caused some disputes in the past. Whether you are "born again" in the here and now because you have given your heart to the Lord there on the spot as you make your way down to the altar. Or "born again" when the resurrection happens and Christ returns. The Greek word which is "*gennao*" can be translated as 'born' or 'begotten.' The translators tend to translate it either way, and they are a bit inconsistent themselves, and really you would have to

know what is being meant in the context to determine exactly how you would best translate it. Here I would believe that it would be ‘begotten.’

So you would read verse 29 as, “*If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is begotten of Him.*” That is the way it is translated by Young’s Literal Translation, and that is the way that Darby translates it in his Bible. So you and I, if we are going to practice righteousness, will have been ‘begotten’ of the Father. This is what you and I most probably believe, and that is the most common understanding in the churches of God. We are “begotten” by the Father, and hence we have a relationship, He is Father, and we are children. We are heading along a path, and one day we will finally be ‘born’ into the God Family and will be super-duper high-powered Spirit beings, and that is what we are looking for.

**I John 3:1-3** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

John seems to get rather excited at this point, and he says “Behold.” The world would not recognize *us* because they did not recognize the Lord Jesus particularly. Why would they recognize us — because we are somewhat less impressive than Jesus was? So if *He* failed to get any recognition from the world, you can guarantee that you and I will not get very much! But John says what fantastic love the Father has shown us, that we should be called *children of God*.

And of course, the understanding that we have had is at the moment of conception, the moment a child is conceived in the womb, begotten, it is a child, and it is not just some sort of flesh forming there, that can be safely aborted without any problem to God. From the moment of conception or begettal, it is *a child* of its father and mother, and even at that point, hence abortion we would construe as murder. That makes Britain and America guilty of several hundred million murders! The scripture is very plain about those who murder *innocent blood* in particular, and if there is any blood that is innocent it is a baby in the womb. So there is a big reckoning one day for our nations.

But here John talks about us being here and now the children of God. The King James Version talks about sons of God. Some people say, 'Does that mean that if I am a woman today, and clearly seem as though I am second rate (which is the way that the world has run for several thousand years), does that mean that I am so second rate as a woman that in the resurrection I will be raised as a man?' Does God only have sons? The answer is that it is really a mistranslation, and in the King James Version it says *sons*, but my New King James says *children*. And if you are a sharp-eyed person you will know that children can be boys and girls. There are both, and that is how the human race continues. The Greek word is 'teknon' and that is the Greek word for child or children. If you are a female now then you will maintain your female characteristics as a God being. God gave them to you, and God gave men certain attributes, a characteristic way of seeing things and thinking things, and gave ladies a different version. He put us together and we become pretty good. In the World Tomorrow it will not change. Also, look at:

**II Corinthians 6:16-18** And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons *and daughters*, Says the LORD Almighty."

We will all be, well we already are God's children, and will continue to be God's children. And some of us will remain eternally having male characteristics and others with female characteristics, and one is not better than the other. One is not inferior to the other, as God designed them both and they reflect the fullness of God's own mind and outlook, and will continue forever. We will have glorified spirit bodies, apparently no marriage *per se*, but our mental attributes and characteristics, and outlooks will continue to be as sons and as daughters.

**I John 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Now we do not know a huge amount about our future bodies, but we do know that they will be somewhat different and they will not all be sort of "sagging a bit," and they will not be full of wrinkles, and we will see the Lord Jesus and God the Father as they really are. Nobody has seen

them so far, people have seen manifestations, for example when Jesus wrestled with Jacob on one occasion, and Moses was allowed to see the Lord God walk past, but nobody has actually seen them, so to speak, with their *real eyes*. We will then — and we shall see them as they really are.

**I John 3:3** And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Well, remember walking *in the light*? That would mean being pure and turning away from the dark, and from what is unpleasant and from what is unseemly. You and I should do this.

**Matthew 5:8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

And, as John says, “*everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself;*” and then we will see God as He is. So you and I should be a people who are endeavoring to be pure in heart, pure in spirit, lead a pure life, walk in the light and not be found playing games in the dark and kidding ourselves that somehow it is okay. It is not okay, it is deadly dangerous.

**I John 3:4** Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

Sin is what you and I should be endeavoring to avoid. Remember, “*if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,*” and we are told not to sin but, if we do, we have an advocate. Sin is in the dark side. “*Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness;*” if you are sinning you are law-breaking, and “*sin is lawlessness.*” The King James says that, “*sin is the transgression of the law.*”

**I John 3:5** And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

Getting back to the question of sin, some people do not like the idea of people endeavoring to keep the Commandments, to keep the Law, because you often hear references to that being *legalistic*. They say that we are getting back into legalism and *bondage*. Typically, when people talk of *legalism* they curl their lip Elvis Presley style, and they spit, because there is nothing worse than legalism (to them). As if being obedient to God is awful, terrible, and what bondage that can be! They say that we have been "set free" from legalism. Of course the term legalism does not appear in the Bible, there is no such expression as legalism in the Bible. But there is the

expression of *lawlessness*. Reading in the New King James Version, it says, "whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness," and sin is lawlessness. *Lawlessness* is in the scriptures; *legalism* is not in the scriptures. God is against lawlessness. People who break the law are not terribly pleasing in God's eyes.

**Matthew 7:21-23** "Not everyone who *says to Me*, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does the will* of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

You get these people who jump on you because you keep God's laws, because you are being "legalistic," but the scripture says nothing against keeping God's laws, but it has plenty to say about those that practice lawlessness.

**Matthew 13:39-42** "The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. "Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who *practice lawlessness*, "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This would be one who practices lawlessness.

**Matthew 24:11-12** "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." And because *lawlessness* will abound, the love of many will grow cold. "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

So here at the end time we have lots and lots of false prophets teaching false things and bringing about lawlessness in abundance. So when you hear people jumping up and down in agitation, and saying that keeping the Commandments is all wrong and legalistic, well just remember legalism and legalistic are not scriptural expressions, but breaking the Commandments, breaking the laws IS in scripture, and in many more places than the ones that I have quoted.

**I John 3:6** Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

So, what does that mean? If we tell a lie once, do we not know Christ? No, if you recollect in the first chapter of John he says “*he who says he does not sin is a liar.*” We all sin, and when we sin we have said before we must run to God. In verse 6, as it talks about sin here, other translations bring out that it means sin *habitually*. In the Good News Bible it says, “*whoever continues in sin*”. In the Weymouth translation, it says “*one who lives in sin.*” The Greek tense of the verb here means one who is continuing in sin, habitually. So a person who habitually lives a lifestyle of sin, even openly, they are not walking in the light, they are not fellowshiping with the Lord Jesus. You cannot be fellowshiping with the Father and the Lord Jesus, and purifying yourself if you are living habitually in sin. Even those of us who are endeavoring to keep the Commandments and be pure do occasionally stumble. When we do sin we can run to the Father, confess our sins and be cleansed of them. We know that if we do sin that we have an advocate with the Father, but you and I should not sin habitually, and we should not have a casual easy-come, easy-go, sinning left, right, and centre and not bothered by it. That is what John is getting at here.

**I John 3:7-8** Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

So fair enough, if you live a lifestyle of sin you are in the dark, and in the dark you will find that you are doing the deeds of the devil, and that is not where you and I are supposed to be.

**I John 3:9** Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

There are two ways of looking at this verse — whether it means *born* or *begotten*. I think in the past we have often preferred to think of it as being "born," trying to defend the argument that "born again" happens at *conversion*. Then we can say that, because we can all sin, then we are not born again, which would be true. But in context you would have to say that it looks like John is talking about the *here and now*. Like today! He is talking about sinning and not sinning, and trying to keep the Commandments and trying to avoid lawlessness. So it does look like he is more talking about *begotten* here. The Darby translation says, “*whoever has been begotten of God does not practice sin,*” it is not habitual to those who have been converted and begotten by

the Father. He cannot go on sinning because he has been begotten of God. So in context I would say that this is John talking about what we are doing here and now, today. One who has been begotten of God, who has yielded to God, one who has committed his life to God, and is walking in the light, because you want to fellowship with the Father and the Lord Jesus, is not one who practices a sinful lifestyle *habitually*. It would be impossible to conceive that, it could not happen. You cannot choose a lifestyle of sin, and pretend that you are walking with the Father and the Lord Jesus.

**I John 3:10** In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest:

John is bringing out here that there are two groups, the children of God, sons and daughters, and the children of the devil, which appear to be the rest.

**I John 3:11** Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

So John appears to be saying that there are two things that you and I should be doing. One is practicing righteousness, which is right living, and loving our brethren. Those are two key aspects for John: practice righteousness and love your brethren.

**I John 3:12** For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

Cain did not love his brother, and got angry with him, got jealous and eventually yielded to the devil. So I guess Cain was really a child of the devil in that specific sense, and murdered his own brother, and killed with hate. As John is telling us, as brethren, we should really, really love each other, and we should equally pursue righteousness.

**Matthew 6:31-33** "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

So Jesus in His private teaching here, says *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness... rather than seeking after what we will eat, where we will live, what we will wear, and what my will pension look like. That is what the world does, because it has no provider, and the world has to provide for itself. But Jesus is saying that we have a Father in heaven, and He looks after the birds of the air, He clothes the grass of the field. Surely you can trust your Father to look after you because He knows that you need these things. So He is telling us what our priorities should be, and that the first thing that we should pursue as our priority is the Kingdom of God. This is meaning His principles, His teachings, His lifestyle and of course righteousness, which is right living. And of course, included in right living would be to love your neighbor as yourself.*

**I John 3:13** Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

No surprise there, but you would not want your brethren to hate you or you to hate your brethren. You should not find hatred, envy, jealousy, or negative outlooks among the brethren.

**I John 3:14-18** We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

So John is still expressing this need for the new Commandment, *“Love your brothers AS I have loved you.”* John says that we ought to be able to lay down our lives for each other (v.16). But if you will not even share your bread (v.17) and your brother has some real needs and you will not even meet his physical needs, let alone lay your life down, he says this ought not to be. As he says in verse 18, it is not a question of talking the talk, loving in word and tongue, and not doing anything. John is quite blunt there.

**James 2:14-17** What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things

which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

And so James says that you should demonstrate your faith by your associated works, your *corresponding actions* with your faith, otherwise it is just empty talk. John is saying back in I John 3, that love is the same: “Oh I love my brother, be warmed, be good and God bless you! (I will not) — but God bless you.” John says, “Hang on, the example that the Lord Jesus set is that we should be willing to lay our lives down for each other, and you will not even share a donut with somebody who has needs? This is a challenge to us all.

**I John 3:19-21** And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

I guess verse 20 is saying if our heart condemns us ... let us say that we are doing right, we are living pretty much as best that we can in God’s way, and we are walking in the light as far as we know how, and yet — because we have done some things in the past we have this niggly sort of doubt, and feel a bit uneasy, and there is still some embarrassment lingering there — so our *own heart* sometimes condemns us. But scripture tells us that God is greater than our heart and He knows all things. If God has forgiven us and washed us clean, then even though *our heart* does not give us the peace of mind, God is okay with us. But, if our heart does not condemn us, and we realize that we have been forgiven, washed clean and made righteous then we can have boldness and confidence toward God.

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

So, verse 22 is quite an interesting verse, “*whatever we ask we receive from Him...*” Whatever we ask, we receive from him? That is fairly open, and that is quite a challenge, because most of us would think, ‘Well whatever I ask, nothing really happens.’ But John says, “*Whatever we ask we receive from Him...*” Why? Well, because we keep His Commandments, and do the things that please God. We love God, and we want to walk in a way pleasing to Him, and we want to be found in the light. We are purifying ourselves, and turning away from the dark. This is people

who are trying to live as God wants them to live. John says, whatever you ask, you are going to receive, because we keep His Commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

**I 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. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

So John has been pretty consistent throughout his letter, ‘keep the Commandments, do not be lawless, sin is lawlessness’. He tells us to purify ourselves, and to walk in the light. Then we can boldly come to the Father, and whatever we ask we will receive. John is only quoting what Jesus or Peter say:

**John 14:13-14** "And *whatever you ask* in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

Jesus made these statements frequently, we only have a few recorded, but John probably heard them again and again, and later in his life he is just bringing this back out.

**John 14:15**" If you love Me, keep My commandments.

There is nothing at all wrong with God’s Commandments, or God’s laws! They explain how to live in a way that is pleasing to God, and because it is good for us. God likes us to have a good life. The worldly view is that God’s Commandments are grievous and burdensome. They think that the Commandments are negative, and just Thou shalt do this, and Thou shalt not do that, and Thou shalt not enjoy thyself, Thou shalt be miserable, and Thou shalt just sit there in a cave eating dry bread and drinking water. That is not the Commandments! God’s Commandments are good and holy, and are for our good always. And, Jesus says, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*"

**John 15: 7** "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will *ask what you desire*, and it shall be done for you.

Once again, "*Ask and you shall receive.*"

**John 15:10** "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

**John 16:23-24** And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, *whatever you ask* the Father in My name *He will give you*. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Our joy will be full, and what we ask we will receive. We have Jesus' promise, His word, which cannot be broken, that this will come to pass. But we say, "Well I do not see that in my life." Well then, you and I have to raise our lives to the standard of God's word, and not try to water God's word down to the standard of our lives, because God is true, Jesus is true.

It looks like what has happened in I John is that John has maybe *diverted slightly* in chapter three, talking about loving each other, talking about being children of the Father and so on? He had finished chapter 2, talking about *deception*, and the many antichrists and knowing the truth, and he is *coming back* to that topic now in chapter 4.

**I John 4:1-3** Beloved, *do not believe every spirit*, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

So he had been talking about many antichrists.

**I John 2:26** These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.

Now in chapter 4 he is coming back to that point. *Test the spirits*, and do not believe every spirit. The Good News Bible says, "*Do not believe all who claim to have the spirit, but test them.*" There are many false prophets who are motivated by many false spirits and you need to test these teachings, test these truths. Not every spirit out there is of God.

**I Thessalonians 5:19-20** Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies.

John had lived a long time, and much deception had ensued, many had fallen away. Even Paul wrote in his day, "All those in Asia have left me, and deserted me". To the Galatians he said, "I

marvel that you are so quickly removed from the truth unto a different gospel”. And the Galatians did not return to Paul.

So, if somebody comes speaking in the spirit, speaking under the influence of the spirit, do not despise that but:

**I Thessalonians 5:21-22** Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

So, when people come speaking in the spirit, when people come with words from the Lord, with prophecies for the future, or just instruction for today, well — do not despise them, by all means have a listen. But, “*Test all things; hold fast what is good.*” Do not be easily swayed.

**II Corinthians 11:1-3** Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly — and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent *deceived Eve* by his craftiness, *so your minds may be corrupted* from the simplicity that is in Christ.

So he is warning them that the serpent managed to deceive Mother Eve, and Paul tells them that he is very concerned this could happen to them.

**II Corinthians 11:4** For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it!

This is what John said, ‘Watch out for these spirits, and do not accept just any spirit’.

**II Corinthians 11:13-15** For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

There are ministers of Satan around, and Paul seems to think that they will head the Corinthians’ way. Paul is warning them, and telling them to watch out, don’t believe every spirit that comes into Corinth. Some are dodgy.

Peter gave the same warning towards the end of his life:

**II Peter 2:1** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as *there will be false teachers* among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

It does not say only one or two will be fooled, but it says:

**II Peter 2:2-3** And *many* will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

They are going to sound good, they are going to look good, and they are going to be like shining lights, but it is deceptive.

**I Timothy 4:1** Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...

That is not just Paul writing nonsense! What Paul means is that there *is deception* out there, there are deceiving spirits, spirits who are out to deceive and to blind, confuse and corrupt. There are doctrines that come from demons.

Again, back in I John 4, John is saying, ‘Beloved dear ones, do not believe every spirit, test the spirits, and test the teachings’. How do you test them? *To the Law and to the testimony*. Do what the Bereans did; check the scriptures daily, whether these things are so. Do not be so easily fooled.

**I John 4:4** You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John says “those that hear US” - he may be talking about himself and the other apostles. They know the truth. But those that dispute these things — they have the spirit of error. When he says, “*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world,*” that is applicable to you and me, and if we have God’s spirit we have a greater power *in us* than is out there in the world. We have the

spirit of truth in us, to teach us all truth. So when it comes to *spotting deception*, you and I should be well up for that. And verse 4 says, 'little children you have overcome them, you have emerged victorious, and you have come out *above*, because the One in you *is greater* than the one in the world'.

**Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, *but Christ lives in me*; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

So Paul knew when he got up in the morning and was shaving, he knew that Christ lived *in him*, and he knew the life that he lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God. And, of course, Christ living in one, in Paul, or in you or in me, is *far more powerful* than any demon or deceiver out there. If we have the Son of God living in us then we have all the power that we would need.

**Ephesians 4:14-17** For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, *to be strengthened with might* through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love...

What Paul is talking about is that you and I should be strengthened with might, with the power of His spirit *in our inner man*, so that Jesus Christ can dwell in us.

**Ephesians 4:20** Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to *the power that works in us*, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

There is a power working within us! So John writes that we have overcome the world, because greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Having God's spirit, that power in us, then we should not go through life defeated, knocked down, confused, aimlessly turning around in circles and falling over our own feet. The question is whether we are actually conscious of that power, or so close to our television sets, the Google news and what is happening in the local Wal-Mart, or our family are bending our ear, and we are just so close to everything that *is natural* that we forget about *the supernatural*. We forget that He who is in me is greater than he

who is in the world. Paul said in one place, *I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength*. And if it is good for Paul it is good for you and me. We should be able to say, *I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength*.

**I John 4:7-8** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

So he is back to this point that there should be *demonstration* that we are walking in the light.

God is love. But, of course, some people's idea of love is some sort of wishy-washy, fluffy-wuffy, pink universe of gentleness and just plain *wimpy*. Well that is not God's love! God cares for us, and God cares for our good and well being, much more than you and I do for ourselves. But God also knows that some things are harmful and injurious to us, so He will step in and He will correct us. It says in another place, that God is a consuming fire. So God is love for sure, but not the soft, empty, meaningless and sloppy stuff. God has genuine love for us, and He wants the best for us.

**I John 4:9** In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Remember God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God *took action*, and He did not just sit there and "feel warmth" toward us, while we stumbled around and ended up wiping humanity off the face of the earth. God loved us, therefore *He sent* His Son.

**I John 4:11-14** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

I think that the "we" is John, and maybe includes Peter, James and the other apostles. John was there, and he saw it. He was there at the stake, he saw the blood, he saw the wounds, and he saw the end of Jesus' physical life. John knows that God loves the world, as he was a witness and he will testify to his dying breath, 'I was there'. God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son. 'I was there, I touched the Son, and I was there at His death'.

**I John 4:15-16** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Sounds a little bit like when Jesus was talking on His final night, and the passages that we read in John 14, 15, 16, and 17, on the Passover evening. That is the way Jesus tended to talk, and I guess John picked up some of that.

**I John 4:17** Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

I guess walking in the light, that is where Jesus is, and that is where you and I are supposed to be, avoiding sin. It says, "*that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.*" That day is coming, and one day we will be hearing our evaluation, receiving our judgment, and John reckons that we can be quite bold. Sort of rubbing our hands with glee, 'It is exciting, I am going to be judged, wow! I wonder what is coming my way. Super duper!'

**I John 4:18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Because fear involves torment, and if you are fearful you are expecting punishment, and as far as John is concerned we are not to be expecting punishment. We are walking in the light, we are fellowshiping with the Father and with the Son, and we can hardly wait for the return of Christ, to be changed and born again into the God family. We will receive our super-duper reward and begin eternity. There is no fear if we recognize that God loves us, and we love God, and we are going His way. Obviously if there is any element of fear, that emotional 'Oops, this could be disappointing, this could be embarrassing, this could be painful, this could be tormenting', well then obviously we have a problem. He who fears, he who expects torment and pain has not been made perfect in love.

**I John 4:19-20** We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

John is continuing to be rather blunt, but he does not like this pretend Christianity: 'I know God, I do not keep His Commandments, do not walk His way, but I am a Christian'. John says that if you say that you love God then you will want to be sharing the same viewpoint that God shares. Because God loves the brethren, He sent His only begotten Son to die for them. God demonstrated His love, and I, John was there, and I was a witness of what the Father did and what Jesus did. So if you say that you love God you really should be seeing things God's way.

**I John 4:21** And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

I do not know what the exact problems in John's day were, but it does seem that John is very conscious that there was an awful lot of finger pointing, a lot of recriminations, a lot of criticism and a lot of selfishness and I guess it must have been that because he seems to be taking quite a lot of time saying that is *not* how it works. We are brethren, we are children, we have the same Father.

**I John 5:1** Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

Same point, if we are all begotten of the same Father then we are to love those who are begotten just as we are.

**I 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 burdensome.

It is repetitive to the point of being almost boring. What is the love of God? The love of God is that *we keep His Commandments*. The world thinks that the Commandments are burdensome, grievous, heavy, and they really restrict having fun. Really, some think, it is best if you are going to be called by God, to be called late in life after you have had a good time. Having fast cars and fast women and then get called later in life and then you can keep God's Commandments. That is entirely wrong. God's way of life is the right way, and Jesus came so that we might have it more abundantly. John knows that, and he is very plain here in verse 2:

*“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments, which are not burdensome.”*

The Greek, ‘keep the Commandments’ is in what they call the continuous tense. Keeps on doing, keeps on keeping the Commandments, it is *a way of life*. The way of transgressors is hard. The wages of sin is death, but the way of God is abundant, and that is the way that you and I should live. John is doing his best to say ‘keep the Commandments’. Walk in the light, fellowship with the Father and you can look forward to the Day of Judgment boldly, because it is going to be a great day.

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*Transcript by Patricia Plunkett (thanks Trish!)*