

Walking in the Truth

by

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Dedication

This book is respectfully dedicated to my wife, Jo Ann, with whom I have spent a life time *Walking in the Truth*.

Table of Contents

Introduction	vii
Chapter 1 The Fellowship of Christ	1
Chapter 2 The Fellowship of the Light	9
Chapter 3 The Fellowship of Darkness	18
Chapter 4 Propitiation for the Fellowship	31
Chapter 5 The Commandments of the Fellowship	41
Chapter 6 Who Is in the Fellowship?	51
Chapter 7 Writing to the Fellowship	63
Chapter 8 Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World	76
Chapter 9 Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System	88
Chapter 10 Stedfast In the Truth	99
Chapter 11 The Hope of the Fellowship	108
Chapter 12 The Sin Is the Iniquity	117
Chapter 13 The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship	131
Chapter 14 The Love of the Fellowship	142
Chapter 15 The Confession of the Fellowship	154
Chapter 16 The Spirit of the Truth and the Spirit of the Error	163
Chapter 17 Herein Is Love	171
Chapter 18 Maturing in the Love	183
Chapter 19 Whosoever Believeth that Jesus is the Christ	197
Chapter 20 For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven	211
Chapter 21 The Witness of God Is Greater	225
Chapter 22 That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life	239
Chapter 23 Communion With Death	249

Introduction

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

The apostle John wrote five books of the New Testament. They are the Gospel of John, the three epistles of John and the Revelation. It is not commonly known, but the order in which the three epistles were written does not correspond with the order in which they are found in the New Testament. Internal evidence enables us to know that Second John was written first, Third John was written second and First John was written last. This is not apparent in our English translation of the first epistle of John, because the past tense verb for *wrote* was translated in the perfect tense *have written* five different times in this epistle. All but one of these occurrences are in chapter two. Two are found in verse fourteen (2:14), one in verse twenty-one (2:21) and the fourth is found in verse twenty-six (2:26). The fifth occurrence of the perfect tense being used for the past tense is found in I John 5:13.

The first four uses of the verb *wrote* refer to the epistles of Second and Third John. This is revealed by the subject and the context in which the verb is found. However the last time the verb *wrote* is used, it is used in reference to the Gospel of John. This, too, is proven by context

Introduction

and subject.

The placement of Third John second in the order of writing is also established by use of the verb *wrote* in verse nine of that epistle. The use of this form of the verb in this place indicates that there had been a previous correspondence between John and the recipients of the epistle that is called Third John. This was a reference to the second epistle of John. These assertions will be made clear when we deal specifically with the verses in question in each of the epistles of John. At this time, it suffices us to say that each of John's epistles is intertwined with the other epistles. Thus the subject matter of each epistle is related to the subject matter of the other epistles. This means that our understanding of each epistle adds to our understanding of each of the other epistles and to the order in which they were written.

The theme of all three of John's epistles is the proclamation of the truth. If the truth is to be proclaimed in all of the world, according to the terms of the great commission, it cannot be done by individuals: for no single individual could go into all of the world and preach the gospel to everyone. Thus a unified effort is needed, but not just any unified effort. The Lord established the church (*ekklesia*: a called-out assembly) for this purpose. In addition to being a called-out assembly, the church is also described in the Greek language of the New Testament by the word *koinonia*. A *koinonia* can be a partnership or a fellowship. The best choice between these two definitions for a local church is a fellowship.

Thus the fellowship of believers known as the church has the privilege to preach the gospel in all of the world. It also has the privilege to baptize those who are converted and to teach them all things that the Lord has commanded them. Since, according to I Corinthians chapter two, the

Introduction

natural man (i.e., the unsaved man) cannot understand the things of God, it is evident that the church is to be made up entirely of believers in Jesus Christ. The unsaved of this world are encouraged to attend the services of the church in order to hear the truth of the gospel that they might be saved, but the membership of a local church should only be those who are saved.

The basis for fellowship within the church is fourfold. First, each member of a local church (as previously stated) must be a child of God by virtue of his faith in the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. Second, each member of the church has a function (spiritual gift or gifts) within the body of Christ that is compared to the parts of a human body. Just as a body has many parts, all working for the benefit of the whole body, each member of the body of Christ works for the edification of the whole body. Third, each member of the body of Christ must be agreed upon the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. There can be no schism in the body. Therefore each member of the body must be in doctrinal accord. Fourth, each member of the body of Christ functions with the other members to fulfill the great commission of our Lord.

Israel was once the custodian of the gospel as the church is now the custodian of the gospel. Israel's disunity, idolatry and false teaching destroyed the truth of the gospel so that it was barely detectable in the ministry of the Jews through a corrupted sacrificial system. Thus our Lord spoke to the nation of Israel through the prophet Amos and asked: *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* (Amos 3:3) This question is rhetorical. The obvious answer is no, they cannot. Disunity does not work in marriage. It does not work in business, and it certainly does not work in the church. Nevertheless the common cry today is: *Doctrine is not important. Doctrine divides. Let us put away our differences. Let us come together on the basis of experience and*

Introduction

love.

If we do this, the church will fall into apostasy as surely as Israel did before the first advent of Jesus Christ. This position of apostasy in the church is prophesied. Paul wrote in II Thessalonians that apostasy would be one of the conditions that must exist as a sign of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore nearly two thousand years ago, at the beginning of the church age, John wrote to establish the basis of fellowship. He did this to minimize apostasy within the church so that the gospel could go forth in truth. Despite all that John wrote to keep churches on the right track, he told the believers to whom he wrote that the spirit of antichrist was already at work in that day.

Therefore, as we study these three epistles of John, we will receive from John the guidelines to identify the children of God and the children of the devil. From John's epistles we will learn the basis for fellowship within the body of Christ. We will also learn the difference between the spirit of the truth and the spirit of the error. John's epistles, then, are a primer for *Walking in the Truth*.

Dale Andre, D.D.

Chapter I

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST

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; (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;) 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 (I John 1:1-3).

In the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord said: . . . *upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (16:18)*. From this we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ established and is building His church. It is not a man-made organization, even though this is not always apparent, especially in today's churches. The apostle Paul used parabolic terms to describe the building of the church. He said: *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase (I Corinthians 3:6)*. This means, in context with other Scripture, that the true church of Jesus Christ is being built by the Godhead (Ephesian 2:21-22) with living stones upon the foundation of Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:4-8). The Lord has given those who make up His church spiritual gifts. These gifts of the Spirit are activated by the Holy Spirit within each local body of Christ for its edification, exhortation and comfort. These gifts enable the church to do

The Fellowship of Christ

by faith the work the Lord called it to do.

The word *church* was used by the translators of our English Bible for the Greek word *ekklesia*. An *ekklesia* is a called-out assembly. It could be an assembly called out to watch the Greek games, or it could be an assembly called out for any kind of public gathering. However the New Testament use of the word refers to a called-out assembly of believers in Jesus Christ who meet together regularly for fellowship, the apostles' doctrine, the breaking of bread, prayer and the furtherance of the gospel into all of the world. Consequently, in the one hundred and twelve references to the church in the New Testament, the word almost always refers to a local assembly of believers in Jesus Christ. This is true despite the fact that all believers of all ages will one day make up one assembly called the church of Jesus Christ.

Because of this aspect of the Lord's church, some individuals refuse to join a local church. They say: *It is unnecessary to join a local church, because we are members of the universal church.* This poses a problem, because to date the universal church has never preached the gospel; it has never won a soul to Christ; it has never baptized a single soul; it has never instructed a single soul in the truth of the Word of God; it has never comforted a soul in sorrow, because of the death of a loved one; it has never rejoiced with those who have cause to rejoice; it has never collected a single offering, nor has it ever supported a single missionary; it has never prayed for the furtherance of the gospel into all of world, because the universal church awaits the day of the first resurrection before it will assemble for the first time. This means that the entire ministry of the church through the ages, from the time that our Lord said: . . . *upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Matthew 16:18), has been done by the

The Fellowship of Christ

local church and not by the so-called universal church.

John was not concerned with the universal church. John was concerned with the local church, which is the fellowship of Christ in this present age. So John was concerned with a church clad in the armor of God; a church in a front-lines battle against the gates of hell; a church actively engaged in the preaching of the gospel so that it might snatch *brands from the burning*. Thus John wrote to identify the enemies of the church by their non-confession of the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. (We will explain what a confession and a non-confession of Christ actually are a little later in this chapter.)

The believers who make up a local body of Christ are called saints. This appellation does not suggest that they are without sin, but that they are separated unto God by the blood of Jesus Christ. The members of a local church can operate according to the truth of the Word of God, or they can be swayed to operate contrary to the truth of the Word of God. This means they can operate in the Spirit, or it is possible for them to operate in the flesh. The fleshly operation of a church will always be accelerated proportionately by the number of non-confessors who make up its membership and are actively involved in its leadership.

The church, as we have previously stated, is a living organism. Its members are (or should be) children of God. Therefore the church is to operate by the authority of God in the truth of the Word of God. In this regard, the Lord has given spiritual gifts to each member of His church. Thus He has given the church a divinely called and equipped leadership. Despite the way that our Lord set up the church to operate, churches can operate like clubs, lodges or any other kind of man-made organization. When this occurs within churches, they have begun a downward spiral

The Fellowship of Christ

away from the truth of the Word of God. This departure is defined in Scripture as an apostasy. This trend away from the truth will ultimately result in the great apostasy that shall precede the second coming of our Lord to this earth.

Thus John wrote his three epistles to minimize this downward spiral. In this regard, no individual who is saved can apostatize. However churches and nations (like Israel) can fall into apostasy. Despite John's warnings to this particular church many churches (with the passage of time) have become social organizations with a social gospel rather than the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Their pastors have become well-educated, refined, social club directors rather than Spirit-led, Spirit-filled men of God: men who live and breathe the Word of God; men who would rather die than to compromise one word of the Word of God.

The dangers that faced this church prompted John to write to establish the basis for fellowship. This is important, because the fellowship of a local church is centered in a common confession or agreement with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus when John wrote of confession, he did so in the sense of the Greek word *homologeō*, and not in the sense of our word, which means *to admit*. *Homologeō* means to be in agreement with another. The other in this case is the Spirit of God. Thus a Biblical confession is to be in agreement with the Word of God (given by inspiration of the Spirit of God) about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any defection from this confession of Christ corrupts the basis for fellowship. Thus John began:

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; (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;) that which

The Fellowship of Christ

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. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. (I John 1:1-4, emphasis mine)

John wrote about Christ. Christ is the focal point of the local church. The Person and the work of Christ provides our reason for fellowship and for service. As we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, this enables us to do the job the Lord called us to do -- to take the truth of the gospel into all the world. Apart from Christ, most of us within the body of Christ would have no basis for social intercourse. The Lord Jesus Christ and our salvation is our common ground. Thus the Lord and our salvation provides the reason for our fellowship and service within a local assembly of believers.

John and the other disciples had fellowship with Jesus. John declared that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Christ. John declared that the fellowship Christ had with the Father from all eternity is available to us. Thus in the Gospel of John, John declared that the eternal Christ came in the Person of Jesus to be the Light to a world in darkness. In his Gospel, John wrote that the men of the nation of Israel did not eagerly receive the Light, because they loved the darkness more than the Light. Thus the apostle Paul elaborated upon the darkness that gripped Israel. Israel's darkness was humanly generated self-righteousness. It was evil that was hidden under a facade of goodness and morality; a place, sadly, where many churches because of apostasy have come to reside:

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone [Jesus Christ]; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be

The Fellowship of Christ

saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (Romans 9:31-10:4, emphasis mine)

John wrote about fellowship with one another and with the Father and with the Son. Nevertheless no one can truly be in the fellowship of Christ who has not received the Light of the world. No one can truly be in the fellowship of Christ who is still trying to establish his own righteousness before God by the works of the law.

John knew Jesus in a way that is different than we have known Him. John knew him after the flesh, that is in His humanity. He also knew Him after the Spirit or in His Deity. Therefore John described that he had looked upon Jesus of Nazareth, and he had handled Jesus of Nazareth; but when he had looked upon Him and handled Him, He perceived Him to be more than a man. He perceived Him to be the Word of Life. Thus by Divine revelation John perceived Jesus to be the Eternal Life which was with the Father from all eternity.

To paraphrase, John said, *If you see Jesus as I see Jesus, then we can have fellowship with one another. Our fellowship will go beyond one another. Our fellowship will be with the Father and with the Son. Our fellowship will bring you joy. It will bring you more than joy. It will bring you full joy, because our fellowship is the only true fellowship with the eternal Christ by means of His indwelling Spirit and His Word.*

God questioned Israel, *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* As we noted earlier, the answer is, no, they cannot. If we are agreed with God about the Person and the work of His Son, as revealed in the Word of God, then we have a basis for fellowship. If, however, someone

The Fellowship of Christ

wishes to cast disparaging remarks upon the means of Christ's birth, denying that He was born of a virgin, we cannot have fellowship. *For what fellowship hath light with darkness?* If someone wishes to cast a slur upon the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, denying that without the shedding of blood there is no remission, we cannot have fellowship. *For what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?* If someone wishes to deny the eternal security of the believer, through the efficacy of the one sacrifice for sin forever, denying that the believer has eternal life and can never perish, we cannot have fellowship. Such a person has denied the work of our Wonderful Lord. Thus the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the infiltration of unbelievers in their midst:

O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened [i.e., to be in a strait, restricted] in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged [in other words, grow up spiritually].

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (II Corinthians 6:11-18, emphasis mine)

Throughout the ages, more emphasis has been placed upon a believer separating himself from the corrupting influences of the world, than separating himself from the false religious and pseudo-Christian systems of this world. This mock morality has provided a huge stumblingblock to the genuine evangelistic efforts of the church. Let me illustrate: our Lord was called a winebibber (drunken sot), a whoremonger, a glutton and a friend of sinners, because He separated Himself from the religious crowd and took the truth of the gospel to those in need. Remember

The Fellowship of Christ

our Lord also said, *They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick* (Luke 5:31).

This describes the religious or moral crowd. They do not see themselves as sinners; therefore they have no interest in the Savior.

Thus the church was sent into the world to preach the gospel to the very people it has traditionally separated from because of a false sense of holiness; while at the same time, through the local ministerial association or similar organizations, churches have tried to have fellowship with those who deny some aspect of the Person or the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is one of the reasons John's epistles are so very important. They provide us with the information we need to identify the enemies of Christ. They also provide us with the information we need to identify those who can aid us in the propagation of the gospel into all the world.

Chapter II

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE LIGHT

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. 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. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in [the] darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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 (I John 1:4-7).

Christianity is the fellowship of the Light, because our Lord Jesus is the Light of the world. In contrast with our Lord, the devil is described in the Scriptures as the prince of darkness. Therefore, as we come to this portion of John's epistle, John compares for us the Light with the darkness. In the natural world light and darkness are opposites. Darkness cannot overpower light, but light can overpower darkness if the source of the light is great enough.

Throughout the Word of God we have natural events, persons, places, things, etc., which represent spiritual truth. These things are called *shadows, types, figures, parables and allegories*. The teaching that explains these representations is foreign to many. In fact, many Christians have never heard a message on Biblical typology. This is remarkable seeing that our Lord taught almost everything by parables, which are types.

The Fellowship of the Light

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and explained to them, that apart from the Spirit of God indwelling the believer, no one can understand the things of God:

. . . we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (I Corinthians 2:7-14, emphasis mine)

Thus we know that John was not concerned with the natural phenomena of light and darkness. John was concerned with spiritual light and spiritual darkness. John was interested in showing the difference between the work of Christ and the work of the devil. Thus John was contrasting the Light with the darkness. The more we know about a natural phenomena which is used to portray a spiritual truth, the more we know about the spiritual truth it portrays. Therefore, in the natural realm, it is important to ask: How did darkness come to be upon the earth? The first verses in the Bible give us the answer: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light* (Genesis 1:1-3).

There are several important things to be considered in these verses. First, God does not do anything imperfectly. Second, the Word of God declares that God does not create things

The Fellowship of the Light

without form and void: *For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else* (Isaiah 45:18, emphasis mine). Third, we find the earth, which was created perfectly in Genesis 1:1, in a condition of being *without form and void* in Genesis 1:2. An examination of the Hebrew reveals that *not in vain* in Isaiah is the equivalent of *without form and void* in Genesis. Consequently something had to transpire between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 to account for the apparent discrepancy.

The prophet Jeremiah, in describing the impending judgment prior to the Babylonian captivity, gives us the answer by describing a previous judgment. Thus Jeremiah tells us what happened between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2: *I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it* (Jeremiah 4:23-28, emphasis mine).

Thus, through a prophetic vision, Jeremiah was allowed to look back to see the earth when *the fruitful place was a wilderness*. Jeremiah was allowed to see the original creation, which had been created perfectly, brought to desolation because of the sin of Lucifer, the son of the morning. Jeremiah was allowed to see these things because the conditions on the earth, at the time of the

The Fellowship of the Light

Babylonian captivity, paralleled the conditions on the earth following the original creation. Thus Israel, who was chosen of God to bear the Light to a lost world, found herself in darkness because of her willfulness. Likewise the original creation was brought into judgment because of the willfulness of Lucifer:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? (Isaiah 14:12-17, emphasis mine)

God did not create the devil as is erroneously believed. Lucifer was created as the anointed cherub that covereth (Ezekiel 28:14). Lucifer became the devil when he desired to usurp the throne and authority of God. Ezekiel tells us he was lifted up in pride because of his great beauty (28:17), and, as can be seen in the above quotation, Isaiah tells us he desired to be God. This is the literal translation of *I will be like the most High*. Apparently Lucifer was somehow associated with the earth when it was originally created. Consequently, when he sinned against God, God judged the earth as it was originally created. It was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep (Genesis 1:2). The darkness that shrouded the earth was characteristic, then, of the one who is the unholy god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4).

The devil and the antichrist are described in Scripture as superintending the kingdom of darkness. Thus the battle of the saints, in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, is against the rulers of darkness. This means that the darkness that enveloped the earth, after the fall of Satan,

The Fellowship of the Light

characterizes the darkness that envelopes everyone who has not come into the light of the gospel, by faith in Jesus Christ. Thus the condition of darkness upon the earth was changed in a similar manner as believers in Jesus Christ are changed when they are translated out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. God said, *Let there be light and there was light*, and, by comparison, the Scriptures say, *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17). The Scriptures also say, *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe* (I Corinthians 1:21, emphasis mine).

The darkness that enveloped the world after the fall of Lucifer does not suggest that there was no source of light. The sun, which provides light to this earth, was still present in the universe where it was placed in the original creation. However it appears from the Biblical narrative that the light of the sun was obscured from the earth by a dense layer of vapor that enveloped the earth. Thus the light was present, but it could not be perceived upon the earth. Consequently the apostle Paul used this as an example of the condition of those who are lost:

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 that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (II Corinthian 4:3-7, emphasis mine)

The light of the gospel is in the world by virtue of the testimony of the local church, but this light remains hidden to the lost until, through the preaching of the Word of God, God says, *Let there be light: and there was light* (Genesis 1:3). This means that the local church is God's

The Fellowship of the Light

means of bringing light to a world that is in darkness.

Once an individual is in the light, he can have fellowship with the apostles (through the Word of God) and with the Father and with the Son. Thus the saved individual has a new status in this world: he walks in the light because he has been translated out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. Once a person is in the light, walking in the light is not a matter of choice. It is a matter of residency. Therefore the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, continually cleanses the believer from all sin.

There were individuals in John's day, just as there are in our day, who claim to be Christians, but they are not. They claim to be in the light, but they are not. The proof of their position is their walk -- they walk in the darkness. However the darkness in which they walk is not what most people think it is. What is the source of spiritual darkness? It came from Lucifer, the prince of darkness, because he thought he could be God. He desired the angels of God to worship him, and one-third of them did. Thus the earth was plunged into darkness because of false worship. Further, after God recreated the earth and placed man in it, the serpent deceived Eve into eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then she gave of the fruit of the tree to her husband, and he did eat. Thus man, who was created in the image of God, was plunged into darkness and became like the one who deceived Eve.

Adam and Eve gained their knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong (commonly called morality) from the devil and not from God. Their first moral judgment, after eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was that they were naked. This is interesting, seeing that they had been naked since the day that God had created them; but this had never been a problem until

The Fellowship of the Light

they gained a knowledge of good and evil independent of God and in violation of the direct command of God.

With their new morality, they felt shame because of their nakedness. This made them uncomfortable, so they sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness. Thus, by the works of their own hands, they attempted to make themselves fit for the presence of God by human effort. This provides a key to understanding, because walking in the darkness is the vain attempts of man to make himself fit for the presence of God by his own efforts.

The true believer does not do this. The true believer knows he is justified freely by God's grace. He knows that his salvation did not come by works of righteousness that he has done. It came by faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore the true believer in Jesus Christ walks in the light of the gospel. He recognizes there was nothing he could do to save himself, and he recognizes there is nothing he can do to undo his salvation. He knows that salvation is entirely the work of God through the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. Thus he knows that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, continually cleanses him from all sin. The true believer in Jesus Christ walks in the truth, while the person who depends upon his own efforts to make himself fit for the presence of God walks in *the lie*.

The lie was fathered by the devil. Remember our Lord spoke to a religious crowd, who were trusting in their own righteousness for a right relationship with God, and said: *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 [the] lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it* (John 8:44). Thus the lie was: *Ye shall*

The Fellowship of the Light

not surely die: for God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:4-5).

The devil's lie is the devil's gospel. He promised her life, but she received death. He promised her that her eyes would be opened, but she was struck spiritually blind. He promised her a knowledge of good and evil that would make her like God, but she fell from the image of God and became like the one who caused her fall. Interestingly, all that the devil promised Eve in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the believer's by faith in Jesus Christ, the tree of life.

We know that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was in the garden of Eden because of the devil. This tree became a temptation to Eve, and the Scripture says: *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed (James 1:13-14).* When we compare this to our Lord's parable of the tares and the wheat, we learn by progressive revelation that it was the devil who caused the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to be in the garden of Eden.

This, then, is what our Lord was talking about when He told the Jews, who accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub: *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things (Matthew 12:33-35).* The

The Fellowship of the Light

good tree is the tree of life, and the evil tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One represents the truth of the gospel, and the other represents the lie of the devil, which the apostle Paul called *another gospel*.

Chapter III

THE FELLOWSHIP OF DARKNESS

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. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in [the] darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (I John 1:5-10).

If there is a fellowship of light, there must also be a fellowship of darkness, because the world is composed of spiritual opposites. The elements of the fellowship of darkness had their beginning with the fall of Lucifer, who was instrumental in the fall of one-third of the angels and in the fall of mankind. Despite the differences between these two fellowships, the fellowship of darkness has foisted itself upon the fellowship of light. Therefore our Lord said: *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth*

The Fellowship of Darkness

good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
(Matthew 7:15-20, emphasis mine)

We can see from this portion of Scripture that our Lord taught that there is a clear distinction between false prophets and true prophets of God. As clearly as a tree is known by its fruit in the natural realm, so it is in the spiritual realm. Therefore the corrupt tree always produces evil fruit, and the good tree always produces good fruit, so that the prophet is known by the tree from which he brings forth his fruit. Do not be deceived into thinking that these fruits have anything to do with a manner of living; they identify the philosophy of the tree of life or the philosophy of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

As we continue with our consideration of the statements about good fruit from the good tree and evil fruit from the corrupt tree, our Lord also said: *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 [preached] in thy name? And in thy name have cast out [demons]? And in thy name done many wonderful works [miracles]? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work [the] iniquity* (Matthew 7: 21-23, emphasis mine).

This statement of our Lord shows us clearly that false prophets can and do operate in the realm of the truth. Therefore they must be able to pass themselves off as believers to genuine believers in Jesus Christ. They do this by seemingly agreeing with genuine believers about the Person and the work of Christ, because believers are quick to accept anyone as a brother in Christ who says he has his faith in Christ. Some false prophets are far more convincing in this role than

The Fellowship of Darkness

others, because, as our Lord said of the Jews, ... *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me* (Mark 7:6). This honoring the Lord with the lips, but not being able to immediately know their hearts, is what makes this category of false prophets so deceptive. This, then, is their sheep's clothing. So, despite the fact that they have called Jesus *Lord*, preached in His name, cast out demons in His name and performed miracles in His name (which would seem to indicate that they are believers), our Lord will say to them, *I never knew you: depart from me ye that work [the] iniquity*.

The working of *the iniquity* is the key to understanding why the claims of these individuals will be rejected, and why they are counted to be false prophets. This can be seen in the Greek text of I John 3:4, where John wrote, *The sin is the iniquity*. This is a reference to Adam's sin. Adam's sin, which was his singular lawlessness (translated *iniquity*), gave the human family a sense of good and evil. This means that these individuals are attempting to serve the Lord by that which was obtained in disobedience to God. Therefore these individuals are not genuine believers; they are wolves in sheep's clothing. This means they are the enemies of God's sheep. This means that these wolves in sheep's clothing will, at some point in time, reveal that they are wolves and not sheep, because it is their nature to bring forth fruit from the corrupt tree. We must not forget that the serpent promised Eve life and that she would be like God (Elohim) by partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but the fruit of that tree produced death. Thus false prophets will attempt to subjugate the grace of God to the moral efforts of man as the Judaizers did in the churches of Galatia.

This makes our understanding of the epistles of John of extreme importance, because John

The Fellowship of Darkness

wrote to identify the counterfeit believers who may come into our churches to feign fellowship with us. So when he wrote to the *elect lady* (this is the same church in each of John's epistles, even though he does not use this appellation in each), both believers and counterfeit believers were included in the use of the personal pronoun *we*. On the surface this may seem to cloud the issue, but with our understanding of John's epistles, we will be able to clearly identify these counterfeits. Even so this identification is not always instantaneous. It may take some time before their fruits are discernable, just as in the natural world. For example, tares and wheat look alike until they begin to bear their fruits. Consequently wolves in sheep's clothing may seem to agree with the Person and the work of Christ until such a time that they think they have the advantage; then they will show their true nature by attacking some aspect of the Person or the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord also referred to false prophets as *thieves and robbers* (John 10:8). Thieves and robbers do the same work, but one does his work covertly and the other does his work overtly. While these two categories of false prophet both deny the truth, the overt denial of spiritual truth is less dangerous than the covert denial of spiritual truth, because it is done openly where it can be seen and counteracted. This can be seen in Jewry in the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were fundamentally sound while the Sadducees denied the resurrection, but both of them were involved in self-righteousness. When the gospel went to the Gentiles, it was counterfeit Christians from the sect of the Pharisees (who gave lip service to Christ) that introduced *another gospel* into the churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:6-7). They were the ones who demanded that ritual and law were necessary for salvation. Thus they involved the moral efforts of man in his

The Fellowship of Darkness

salvation.

Further our Lord said that the true prophet can be known by the fact that he does the will of the Father. What does this mean? In the Gospel of John the Jews came to Jesus and said, *What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent (6:28-29)*. Thus, in this regard, the will of the Father and the work of the Father are one and the same, because our Lord came and fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law, as well as all righteousness. He then died in our stead, to bear our judgment. When He was raised from the dead, He gained the victory over death. When we believe that He did these things in our stead, then His work, by faith, is imputed to our accounts.

What, then, did John mean when he wrote: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us* (I John 1:8-10, emphasis mine). Before we attempt an explanation of these verses, we need to make some poignant observations.

The corrupt tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The good tree is the tree of life, but not the original tree of life in the garden of Eden, for that tree made no provision for sin; but the *seed of the woman*, Jesus Christ, offered Himself as a ransom for sin. This, then, makes the tree of life to be our Lord's sacrifice for sin on the cross of Calvary. These statements are self-evident if we follow the origin of sin and redemption through the Bible. Genesis is the book of beginnings. First facts are found there. Since mankind fell from the image of God when

The Fellowship of Darkness

Eve was deceived and Adam wilfully sinned, and since the tree of the knowledge of good and evil gave man a knowledge of good and evil, it was the fruit of that tree that provided man with his present sense of morality.

This is an important key to understanding how the human family thinks. It thinks according to the knowledge received from that tree. Solomon called this way of thinking: *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). This means that man's concepts of morality are corrupted by their source. Few people understand that man in his present state is not in the image of God. He fell from that image when he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus man thinks according to a knowledge of good and evil that he received in disobedience to God. This knowledge is subjective and without absolutes. Consequently Webster defined *moral conduct* as: *conduct conforming to the customs or accepted standards of a particular culture or group*. This means that man's morality is as varied as the cultures and religions of this world are varied.

If man's moralities are compared to the law of God, there may be some points of comparison, but in the final analysis man's moralities will deviate from the perfection demanded by the law of God. Consequently James wrote: *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* (James 2:10). Man's morality cannot produce the perfection God's law demands, and the apostle Paul tells us why: *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God [did] sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned [the] sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us [not by us], who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* (Romans 8:3-4, emphasis mine).

The Fellowship of Darkness

After the fall, as we have already seen, the tree of life in the midst of the garden was forbidden to Adam and Eve. This was to prevent them from eating of it and living forever in bodies that bore the consequences of their sin. Nevertheless God promised them a Kinsman Redeemer through the seed of the woman. God showed them that the Kinsman Redeemer would have to shed His blood in their behalf in order to redeem them. Thus the new tree of life became the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary, and the fruit of that tree declares: *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 [Spirit]; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3:4-7, emphasis mine).

The fruits of the two trees are thus made clear, and this can be seen in the first moral judgment that Adam and Eve made after they ate of the corrupt tree. They felt shame because they were naked, even though they had been naked from the day that God had created them. What changed their perspective? It was their knowledge of good and evil that they had received in disobedience to God. They had acted contrary to the direct command of God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Consequently, with the knowledge of good and evil obtained from this tree, they tried to cover their shame by the works of their own hands; but their attempts at covering their shame did not give them a sense of well-being before God. This had an immediate affect upon their relationship with God. Rather than looking forward to fellowship with God, as they had in the past, they hid themselves from His presence. It can be seen, then, that

The Fellowship of Darkness

man's new-found morality did not draw him closer to God or make him like God, according to the lie of the devil; but it separated him from God, and thus it has done with Adam and his race ever since.

Thus it was God Who initiated the contact. He asked Adam, *Where art thou?* just as He asks us the same thing through the preaching of the gospel. *Salvation is of the Lord* (Jonah 2:9). God knew perfectly well where Adam was. God is Omniscient. The question was not for God's sake, but for Adam's. It forced Adam to acknowledge his sin before God, because he replied that he had hidden himself because he was naked. Then God asked: *Who told thee that thou was naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?* (Genesis 3:11) We have read these words over and over throughout our Christian lives without giving them much thought. Yet these words reveal very clearly that man's knowledge of good and evil (his sense of morality) did not come from God, for Eve was tempted by three things which she saw in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: the lust of the flesh (*it was good for food*), the lust of the eyes (*it was pleasant to the eyes*) and the pride of life (*it was a tree to be desired to make one wise*). Consequently John wrote: *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* (I John 2:15-16, emphasis mine).

God pronounced a curse upon Adam, Eve, the serpent, and the earth as a consequence of their sin; and, according to God's promise, Adam and Eve died spiritually that day, and they began to die physically (Genesis 2:16-17). God is a God of Mercy and a God of Grace. Both of

The Fellowship of Darkness

these attributes require an object. Therefore God did not leave Adam and Eve and their posterity in a hopeless condition. In the judgment of the serpent, God promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent would bruise his heel. Even though this promise was couched in mystery, it was God's promise of the Kinsman Redeemer: One Who would come in the fulness of the time to bear the judgment of their sins and allow God to bestow His mercy and save them by His grace.

This brings us to another characteristic which came to us from the corrupt tree. It is the denial of man's intrinsic sin nature. Psychologists and many religious systems try vainly to explain away the sin nature. They blame man's overt behavior on circumstances, environment, maltreatment in childhood, and a host of other excuses. They refuse to acknowledge that man is corrupt by nature, albeit in varying degrees. Believers may not run to the same excess of riot that we formerly did, but at times we all run. The prophet Jeremiah confirms what the world's system wishes to deny: *The heart [i.e., the innermost being of man] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings* (Jeremiah 17:9-10). And king Solomon added: *For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Further, after establishing the guilt of the unsaved Jews and Gentiles in this world, Paul asked the Roman Christians: *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 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*

The Fellowship of Darkness

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. 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. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Roman 3:9-20, emphasis mine).

Man does not become a sinner by sinning. Man sins because he is born with a nature to sin. Ironically the same nature which causes man to sin causes him to differentiate between good and evil, right and wrong, but in a very subjective manner. Man received this nature from his father Adam, who from the hand of his wife received the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and did eat.

Therefore, returning to our text, John wrote: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (I John 1:8). In the Greek text of the New Testament, a reference to sin in the singular, without naming the particular sin and without the use of the definite article, invariably refers to the sin nature of man; but with the definite article, sin in the singular refers to Adam's sin and all that is associated with it. Thus a denial of man's sin nature is self-deceiving. The one who claims to be in Christ, yet denies he is a sinner by nature (according to our text), does not reside in the truth. He is not in Christ. So when John said, *If we say we have no sin*, he referred to professing Christendom. In this realm, if there is a denial of the sin nature, the one who denies it is a counterfeit. Thus our Lord said of those who profess

The Fellowship of Darkness

to know the Lord, but do not: ... *If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* (Matthew 6:23) This means that those who entertain false hopes are in a terrible state. They think they have life, but they do not.

After John wrote of the sin nature, John wrote of the confession of sins in I John 1:9. This verse is perhaps one of the most misunderstood and misused verses in all of the Bible. It is not about the confession of personal sins, even though, by virtue of the way it was translated, this is what is commonly understood to be the meaning of this verse. Despite this misunderstanding, an analysis of this verse in the Greek text reveals that this interpretation does not agree with the grammar of the Greek text. The grammar suggests that this is the confession that is made by sinners at the moment of their salvation, thus it is a one-time confession rather than a daily practice.

Some forms of speech are difficult to translate from one language to another, especially with a one-word for one-word translation. In this verse John used a present subjunctive verb for the word *confess*. This means you may or you may not (in the present tense) confess your sins. He then used a plural noun, with the definite article, to describe what might be confessed (which is the sins of the confessors). He followed this with two past-subjunctive verbs to describe the results of the hypothetical present-tense confession. This was to express the possible past-tense results for a possible present-tense confession. This all sounds a little confusing, but it is absolutely true to the grammar of the text and the theology of the New Testament.

However, before we offer a free translation of verse nine, we need to understand the meaning of the Greek word *homologeō*, which in our text is translated *confess*. *Homologeō* means

The Fellowship of Darkness

to be in agreement with another. Thus a confession is not a simple admission, as it is in English; it is an agreement with God about whatever is confessed. This means that a free translation of our text could read: *If we should be in agreement with God about our sins [that we in fact are sinners by nature and by practice], He is faithful and just [i. e., God is faithful to His justice, and in justice God has judged Jesus Christ for our sins] and has thus provided the possibility for the forgiveness of our sins and the cleansing of us from all unrighteousness* (See I John 1:9). In other words the possibility of a present-tense confession, or agreement with God about our sins, provides the absolute possibility of a past-tense forgiveness and cleansing from all unrighteousness. One is dependent upon the other. It takes place the moment a sinner is quickened by the Holy Spirit and accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior. We are not suggesting that the new believer understands these theological ramifications; he simply knows that he is a sinner and he cannot save himself and that Christ died for his sins. Thus the confession is in the present-tense, and the forgiveness and cleansing took place judicially in time-past with Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Therefore, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, at the moment of salvation, God reckoned that when Christ died, we died with Him; when Christ was buried, we were buried with Him; and that when Christ arose from the dead, we were counted to have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-5). This is a walk of faith.

The person who walks in darkness, like Cain, the first son of Adam, walks on the basis of what he can do for God and not on the basis of what God has done for him. Therefore he will not identify himself with Adam's sin and the resultant sin nature, which was passed to Adam's posterity. He insists that there is some goodness in man that can be used for the glory of God.

The Fellowship of Darkness

He may even admit that he needs a Savior, but he will insist upon bringing presents to God out of his basket of human morality. He must insist upon bringing fruit from the corrupt tree, because it is his nature to do so! This persistence takes us to John's next statement: *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him [God] a liar, and his word is not in us* (I John 1:10).

The denial of our relationship to Adam's sin and its resultant nature is a denial of the Word of God (I Corinthians 15:49). Every word of the Bible (God's Word) is God breathed, that is, God gave it by plenary inspiration, so that the very words in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Scriptures were chosen of God and penned by man. Thus to deny the veracity of the Word of God is to call God a liar. The person who does this does not walk in the light. The person who does this is in darkness. The person who does this is in danger of sealing his eternal damnation with no hope of escape. He is in danger of committing the unpardonable sin and thus becoming a child of the devil. John will make this clear to us in chapters three and four of First John.

Chapter IV

PROPITIATION FOR THE FELLOWSHIP

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 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: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 1:8-2:2).

We stated in the previous chapter that sometimes there are difficulties in translating some statements from one language to another. This is especially true when we try to translate literally, word for word. Some tenses and some words seem to almost defy a literal word-for-word translation. All in all, the King James translators did a marvelous job. In my opinion, the classic style and language of the King James Bible still places it far above every other English Bible translated in the last four hundred years.

Nevertheless, at the present time in otherwise fundamentally sound churches, there is a premise being propagated that God has preserved His Word in the King James translation of the Bible, and not in the languages in which it was written. This premise is false. It is false despite the fact that it was propagated to give English-speaking people assurance that their Bible is

Propitiation for the Fellowship

authoritative, but this assurance is totally unnecessary.

The King James Bible was translated from the Masoretic text of the Old Testament Scriptures and the Textus Receptus of the New Testament Scriptures early in the seventeenth century. Earlier English translations, like the Geneva Bible, were also consulted by the translators to minimize changes between one translation and another. I have had difficulty with the premise that God preserved His Word in the King James Bible from the first time I heard it, because it seems so very evident to me that God preserved His Word in the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts in which they were inspired of God and written by *holy men of God* (II Peter 1:21). If this were not so, the King James translators would not have had texts to translate.

This raises several questions. First, why would God change from the preservation of His Word in the original languages in which they were written to a language that has been in flux since its inception? Second, why would He do this approximately fifteen hundred years after the writing of the New Testament and three thousand years after the writing of the first books of the Old Testament? Third, if God preserved His Word in the King James Bible, how did God preserve His Word before the King James Bible was translated? Fourth, how did the translators translate -- did they translate under the inspiration of the Spirit of God? Since there is no Scriptural authority for the inspiration of a translation, it must be assumed that the translators were not inspired of God, because there are noticeable differences between some of the original language texts and some texts in the King James Bible. Therefore, it should be understood, the translators translated existing texts that were copied and recopied during the centuries that had passed since they were originally written. It was in these copied texts that God has preserved His Word. This confirms

Propitiation for the Fellowship

that the King James Bible is what it is, a translation. This in no way impugns its authority, but it does require that we do some serious investigation when translational difficulties arise, and they do arise.

How God preserved His Word is not as important as the fact that He promised to preserve it, and it is impossible for God to lie. After speaking of prophetic events that shall precede the second coming of our Lord, Jesus said: *Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation [a people, Israel] shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matthew 24:32-35, emphasis mine).*

In the history of the region, we have seen the temple destroyed and Israel buried in the Gentile nations of the world in 70 A.D. This was done according to our Lord's prophecies in His Olivet discourse. We have also seen Israel become a nation again on May 14, 1948, according to the parable of the fig tree. We have seen the Arab nations of the world swear to drive Israel into the sea, yet they have not been able to do it. In fact Israel has won every war with the Arabs since Israel became a nation again in 1948 (according to a partial fulfillment of the *dry bones* prophecy in thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel). Israel is indeed a nation again back in her own land, but God's Spirit is not yet in her because she has not yet been saved. Israel's salvation as a nation will take place when she looks on Him Whom she pierced at the second coming of our Lord to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 12:10.) Thus God has kept (and will keep) His Word to Israel, and He has kept His word to preserve His words. God could not do otherwise.

Propitiation for the Fellowship

We hold to the plenary inspiration of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Scriptures. Any translation, no matter what language it is translated into, bears comparison with the original languages in which the Scriptures were written. It behooves us, then, to *Study to shew [ourselves] approved unto God, [workmen] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* Every pastor or student of the Word of God should avail himself of as much help in the original languages of the Scriptures as is practical. The pastor does not need to be fluent in these languages, but he should know how to use concordances, analytical concordances, interlinear translations, lexicons, grammars and other helps. These tools, along with his spiritual gifts, will greatly aid him in his study of the Scriptures.

As we progress in our studies of the epistles of John, we shall see that there were times when the translators did not always choose the best English word for a particular Greek word, nor did they translate definite articles that affected the meaning of a text, nor did they convey certain nuances associated with some tenses and moods in the Greek language. This has veiled some truth and in some instances produced what seems to be contradictions. Since God cannot lie, and since all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, contradictions cannot actually exist.

One of these nuances can be seen at the end of chapter one, where a free translation of what John wrote is: *If we should say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us* (I John 1:10). The true believer cannot deny his sins, but the counterfeit believer can. So we have stressed the conditional subjunctive mood by the use of the word *should* in our free translation. This word limits the denial of sins to the counterfeit, because the true believer cannot deny his sin nature and its resultant sins (I John 1:8).

Propitiation for the Fellowship

At the beginning of the second chapter of his first epistle, John wrote: *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: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world* (I John 2:1-2). As translated, this text seems to be an appeal to the believer to minimize sin in his life. While this is a noble concept, it is not what John actually wrote. Personal sin should indeed be minimized in the life of the believer, but this is best done by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, thanksgiving for our judicial relationship with the Lord, and growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord.

Once again, in these verses, John used a grammatical construction that was common in Greek but is difficult to translate literally into English. He addressed his spiritual children with the present-tense verb *write*. He followed this with an aorist subjunctive verb, with a plural subject and with a negative, to describe sin. Then he used an aorist subjunctive verb, with a singular subject, to describe one who may have sinned. This construction, like I John 1:9, sounds very confusing, but if we patiently consider it, it will reveal nuances of meaning that cannot be seen in our English translation.

Little children is the Greek word *teknion*. It comes from *tikto*. It means to bring into the world. Or, as John used it with the personal possessive pronoun *my*, it is an affectionate term which is properly translated *my born ones*. Thus, in this portion of his letter, John became more personal and specifically addressed those who were *born again* under his ministry. He knew that they were saved, but he also knew that there were counterfeits in their midst, and he was concerned for his spiritual children's welfare. They needed to know how to identify the

Propitiation for the Fellowship

counterfeits who were in their midst. John, like any good father, wished the best for his children. This is true in the natural world, and it is especially true in the spiritual world. So this speaks for the theme of John's epistles, which is expressed in Third John: *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth* (III John 1:4). Indeed, this is the desire of every man in the ministry who has been truly called and equipped of God.

Reflecting back to the latter part of chapter one, John dealt with the denial of the sin nature, which produces personal sins. He also dealt with the possibility of a past-tense forgiveness and cleansing predicated upon a possible present-tense agreement with God about our sins. Such an agreement, as we have seen, effects the believer's salvation. John followed this with the possible claim of some that they had not sinned, which claim, as John pointed out, would make our Lord a liar. The subject has not changed as we leave chapter one and enter chapter two. So, with a view to the Greek construction of I John 2:1-2, a free translation is: *My born ones, these things I write unto you, if it were that you sinned not. But if it were that a certain one sinned, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

This portion of Scripture deals with two sides of one coin. Some of these Jews, who professed faith in Christ, were still affected by the traditions of the elders. These traditions projected the Jew into the idea that he loved his neighbor as himself and into the conditions of the kingdom, when *nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*. This was naive at best, but it was also an indirect denial of man's sin nature, which produces personal sins. So despite their naivety, and because they had made a profession of faith

Propitiation for the Fellowship

in Christ, John simply alluded to the sin of Adam when he wrote: *But if it were that a certain one sinned* This was an allusion to the federal headship of Adam, whose sin gave man a nature to sin and therefore personal sins, thus supplying the ground for the refutation of their denial. Then, to carry his point to its conclusion, John alluded to the Federal headship of Christ when he wrote: *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.* Federal headship is the theological relationship whereby one individual can act for an entire people (See I Corinthians 15:47-49). Therefore if Adam could plunge the entire human family into sin, then Christ could provide the remedy for Adam's sin and all of its resultant sins. John's allusions revealed that you cannot have one condition without the other (I Corinthians 15:22). Thus John revealed the futility of those who deny their judicial relationship to Adam and his sin. Such a denial excludes them from the benefits of Christ's advocacy as the one Mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5) through His Federal headship, until they find themselves in agreement with God (I John 1:9).

The English word *propitiation* carries the idea of satisfying an angry god. This is not the truth that is conveyed by the fact that Christ is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Salvation is by grace. Grace is unmerited favor. Therefore the difference is considerable between an individual or priest trying to appease an angry god (to make propitiation), and God in His Love, Mercy, and Grace standing in the sinner's stead in the person of Jesus Christ to provide an atonement (a covering) for sin through His shed and applied blood. This covering for sin is possible because the Scriptures declare: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement [a covering]*

Propitiation for the Fellowship

for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement [a covering] for the soul (Leviticus 17:11, emphasis mine).

In the Old Testament Scriptures, God gave the nation of Israel the pattern of the tabernacle in the wilderness at the same time that He gave them the law on Mount Sinai. This was a building that was erected by the specific instructions of God to provide a place where God and man could meet and resolve the sin question. Besides the daily sacrifices, this resolution for sin took place (in type) annually on the day of Atonement, when the high priest made a sacrifice for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. He took the blood of the sacrificial goat into the holiest of holies, a compartment within the tabernacle which represented the dwelling place of God, and there the high priest sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat to make an atonement (a covering) for sin.

The mercy seat was the golden lid to the Ark of the Covenant. There were two cherubim kneeling on the mercy seat with their wings extended towards each other (nearly touching). Their faces were bowed towards the Ark of the Covenant. Thus, in type, one cherub represented God's Holiness, His Righteousness and His Justice, while the other cherub represented His Love, His Mercy and His Grace.

The Ark was placed in the holiest of holies as a testimony against Israel, because everything that was contained in the Ark spoke of a broken relationship by Israel towards God. The Ark contained the second set of stone tablets upon which the law was written, Aaron's rod that budded and a pot of manna. Moses cast the first tablets of the law to the ground and broke them, because Israel had violated everything that was written on them when they forced Aaron to

Propitiation for the Fellowship

make a golden calf, and they worshipped it. Aaron's rod was also laid up in the Ark for a testimony against Israel. It testified against Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their rebellion with the two hundred and fifty princes of renown against the authority of Moses and Aaron. When these rebels died at the hand of the Lord, Israel charged Moses with their deaths, and they sought to choose a new leader to take them back to Egypt. God confirmed the authority of Moses and Aaron when He caused Aaron's rod to bud and bloom. The last item in the Ark was a pot of manna. It also testified against Israel. God had fed the Jews with manna for forty years in the wilderness. Even so the Jews came to despise the manna rather than rejoicing in God's provision of life from heaven, which represents Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. Thus, when the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat on the day of Atonement, all that was contained in the Ark was covered by the blood providing salvation for Israel and a testimony to them of God's faithful Love, Mercy and Grace -- because God's Holiness, Righteousness and Justice were satisfied by the atoning (covering) blood. Thus, as with Adam in the garden, the day of Atonement testified that salvation was from God to man, not from man to God.

When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek (in the Septuagint), the translators used the Greek word *hilasterion* for the Hebrew word translated *mercy seat*. *Hilasterion* comes from the root word *hilaskomai*. *Hilasmos* is another derivative of the same word, and it is the word John used to describe the work Jesus Christ did *for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*. This is not an accident. God is Omniscient. Therefore: It is the *blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanseth us from all sin*. When our Lord ascended into heaven in His High Priestly role, it was His blood that was sprinkled on the mercy seat in heaven,

Propitiation for the Fellowship

of which the mercy seat on earth was a type.

John's epistles were written to Jews who were professed believers in Jesus Christ. They were familiar with the sacrificial system, and they were familiar with the day of Atonement and the other feasts of the Jews. Thus they were familiar with the concepts represented by the Greek words *hilasterion* and *hilasmos*. Their sins were covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, but the atonement (covering) was not limited to them. Jesus Christ has made a covering for the sins of the whole world, but none of this is reflected in the meaning of the English word *propitiation*.

The benefits of this payment are for all who will believe that Jesus is the Christ. It is for all who will believe that Christ stood in their stead in life, fulfilling every jot and tittle of the law, and He stood in their stead in death, bearing the judgment of their sins. Ironically this is possible because they were charged with a sin they did not commit. This is the sin John alluded to in our text. Therefore, by the same sort of judicial reckoning, they (who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ) were charged with a righteousness they could not otherwise possess.

Federal headship is at the heart and core of the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Even though John never mentioned Adam by name, nor the term *federal headship*, these were the concepts he alluded to in the difficult grammatical structure of these two verses; a structure, I might add, that was overlooked by the King James translators -- a structure that would remain totally unknown to us in this text without a reference to the Greek language in which it was inspired of God and written by John.

Chapter V

THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (I John 2:3-6).

John wrote to believers within the fellowship of Christ to give them the ability to differentiate between true believers and counterfeit believers, both of whom were in the local church. John revealed that the fellowship of Christ walks in the light. He also revealed that it cannot walk in the darkness. The light and the darkness that John wrote about are contrasting spiritual paths. This same truth was revealed by our Lord with a different analogy when He said: *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit (Matthew 12:33).*

Both John and our Lord used natural things to teach their audiences about spiritual things, even so our Lord also said: *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in [the] darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).* He spoke these words after the scribes and the Pharisees (esteemed religious leaders in Israel) had brought a woman unto him while He was

The Commandments of the Fellowship

teaching in the temple. *They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?* In John's account of these events he revealed that they did this to tempt our Lord. Even so our Lord seemed to ignore their accusations against the woman when He stooped down and wrote upon the ground.

The law required that both parties guilty of adultery should be put to death (Leviticus 20:10), but they had only brought the woman to Jesus. Considering the law, and considering that their motive was to test the Lord, and considering that their desire was to establish their own righteousness (Matthew 23:27-28), it is likely that our Lord wrote, *Where is the man?* This should have brought instant conviction for their hypocritical judgment which left the man out. It was then that our Lord stood and *said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her.* Then He stooped down and wrote upon the ground a second time. Again, we do not know what our Lord wrote, but whatever He wrote, it condemned them for their duplicity with the woman, so that, from the eldest to the youngest, they went away. *When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more* (John 8:10-11).

Our Lord was not suggesting by this command that she could be sinless; He was apprising her of her covenant responsibility as a Jewess. Her faith in Christ is not stated in John's account, but it certainly is implied. Therefore she stood in the position of an Old Testament saint: she was a sinner redeemed by grace through faith, but she was still responsible to her covenant relationship

The Commandments of the Fellowship

with God, because Christ's vicarious life, death, burial and resurrection had not yet been completed. On the other hand, her accusers were religious men who tried to establish their righteousness before the law by the age-old practice of accusing others and excusing themselves. It was at this point in time that our Lord spoke to the Jews in the temple about the light and the darkness.

Thus the fruit of the good tree corresponds to a walk in Christ. This is a walk of faith. The one who walks in the light believes that what God has promised, God is able also to perform. Therefore he is at rest in the perfect righteousness of Christ, which he received by God's grace through faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In contrast to this walk, the fruit of the corrupt tree claims that a person can make himself like God by what he does, thus making human morality (a knowledge of good and evil) an essential part of salvation. This is a walk in the darkness, because this walk corresponds with the lie of the devil that was embodied in the serpent's deception of Eve. Remember, Eve gained a knowledge of good and evil by a direct disobedience to God's command: *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof [dying thou shalt die]* (Genesis 2:16-17).

This makes our text one of those portions of Scripture that must be approached with caution and without presuppositions, which is a good practice with most Scripture. If we presume, as apparently the King James Bible translators presumed, that the commandments John mentioned in our text are the ten commandments, then we are in danger of falling into the error of the Judaizers. Remember, they corrupted the churches of Galatia with *another gospel*. The Judaizers

The Commandments of the Fellowship

taught the Galatians that it was necessary for them to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved. They did this after Paul's first missionary journey into Asia, when Paul departed the Galatian churches at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe to return to Antioch in Syria. Despite their legalizing efforts, Paul completely defeated their arguments in his epistle to the Galatians, but this did not change their minds. Later, at the counsel in Jerusalem, by the leading of the Spirit of God and the testimony of the apostles and the Scriptures, it was determined that ritual and law were not necessary for salvation.

Therefore, since: *The just shall live by faith[,] And the law is not of faith . . . (Galatians 3:11-12)*; and since the Scriptures say: *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the [full] knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20)*, the commandments in our text cannot be the ten commandments. The solution to this apparent contradiction is found in the Greek text of John's epistles. The word translated *commandments* is the Greek word *entole*. It comes from the word *teleo*. *Entole* can be used to refer to the ten commandments. It was translated this way many times in the New Testament, but this does not mean it should be used this way in our text. The root word, *teleo*, provides the solution. It means to complete or fulfill, and it was used in Biblical times in the sense of fulfilling one's words. This definition, interestingly, could be used in almost every occurrence of the word *entole* in the New Testament, without wresting the Scriptures. It is this definition of *entole* that fits our text better than the word *commandments*, and this is proven in verse five: *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (I John 2:5, emphasis mine)*.

Thus the test of the true believer is his relationship to the Word of God. Our Lord said:

The Commandments of the Fellowship

I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known of mine (John 10:14). In Biblical times the word of the shepherd gave comfort to the sheep, just as the Word of God provides comfort and confidence for believers. Thus our Lord said: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* *I and my Father are one* (John 10:27-30, emphasis mine).

The true believer in Jesus Christ has no more capacity to keep the ten commandments than an unsaved man has. The Scripture is very clear on this point. Reflecting back to the council at Jerusalem, Peter testified: *Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we [Jews] shall be saved, even as they [Gentiles]* (Acts 15:10-11); and the apostle Paul wrote: *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin* (Romans 3:20, emphasis mine). Even though the believer does not have the capacity to keep the ten commandments, he agrees with them and serves them with his mind (Romans 7:22-25); but he understands that he does not stand before God on the basis of human righteousness. He stands in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:21) by faith in His vicarious life and death.

The Word of God reveals that all in the human family are counted to have sinned when Adam sinned. It reveals that no one can be justified by attempts at law-keeping. It reveals that the sins of the whole world were judged in Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. It reveals that

The Commandments of the Fellowship

if one believes the promises of God with respect to the judgment of his sins in Jesus Christ, he is justified freely by God's grace. Therefore, in the Word of God, the believer is declared to be changed completely in his relationship with God so that he is *accepted in the beloved*. In the Greek text of Ephesians, this literally means that the believer is an object of God's grace. Thus the sin question is settled. The believer is no longer judged a sinner. Rather, he is declared to be a saint. He is declared to be just. He is declared to be holy. He is declared to be a child of God. He is declared to be an heir and joint heir with Jesus Christ of all the possessions that God has promised. The believer is counted dead to the law and sin. He is, then, counted alive unto God. In this new relationship he is to walk in newness of life, and the *newness of life* is a walk of faith. The Scripture declares: *The just shall live by faith[,] And the law is not of faith* Further, we know that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. Therefore the newness of life is a life that is centered around the Word of God.

John said that the believer is to walk as Jesus walked. Jesus' walk is characterized by these statements from the gospel of John: *I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me* (John 5:30, emphasis mine). *Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him* (John 7:16-18, emphasis mine).

Returning to the account of the woman taken in adultery, when the woman was left alone,

The Commandments of the Fellowship

Jesus spoke of many things to the Jews in the temple, and *As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free* (John 8:30-32, emphasis mine). When the Scriptures say that many believed on Him, this does not mean that they believed unto salvation. It means that they considered the possibility that He might be the Christ. Therefore He said, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed*. The proof of whether they were in Christ or not came immediately when Jesus said: *And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth [the] sin is the servant of [the] sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed* (John 8:32-36).

This exchange between our Lord and the Jews was a strange exchange, indeed, if they really believed on Him. Their statement, *We be Abraham's seed*, proves their trust was in their natural lineage, and it was also in the works of their own hands. Therefore a free translation and interpretation of our Lord's statement to them is: *Whosoever makes the product of Adam's sin [the sin] his philosophy of life is a servant of the philosophy of the sin*. In other words, Eve was deceived into believing that she could be like God through a knowledge of good and evil obtained in disobedience to God, but the fruit of that tree did not produce life, it produced death. Therefore anyone who serves the concepts derived from the sin of Adam is the servant of the sin of Adam. This is proven by the ensuing conversation between our Lord and the Jews, when He asked them:

The Commandments of the Fellowship

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 [by interpretation: a slayer of souls] from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh [the] lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not (John 8:43-45, emphasis mine).

The Lord Jesus Christ made it very clear, He lived His life based solely upon those things which He had seen and heard with the Father. We recognize, of course, that Jesus is God. Therefore His capacity to perform the will of the Father far exceeds our capacity. Even so, we get a glimpse of the life of the believer in Paul's epistle to the Colossians: *And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. 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. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ* (Colossians 2:4-8, emphasis mine).

There are at least four things that we can learn from this portion of Scripture. First, we learn from Paul's instructions to the Colossians that they were to live their lives the same way that they became believers. This was by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, which is another way of saying: *The just shall live by faith*. Second, Paul taught the Colossians that they were to be rooted and grounded in the fundamentals of the faith. Third, as they abounded in the truths that they were taught, they would be motivated by

The Commandments of the Fellowship

thanksgiving in their service for the Lord. Fourth, Paul had the same fears for the Colossians that John had for the church to whom he wrote. Paul feared that the Colossians could be beguiled by the philosophy, vain deceit, tradition of men, and rudiments (regimens) of the world. Therefore he reminded the Colossians that the walk of a Christian requires the same elements that brought him to faith in Christ: the Word of God and the Spirit of God. These enable the believer to be fully persuaded that what God has promised, He is able also to perform.

Thus Christ was received through the preaching of the Word of God. He was not received by the studies of the philosophies of men, and not through the traditions of men. Thus He was not received by the observance of the rules and regulations of this world's system. He was received by simple faith through hearing the Word of God preached. He was not received by merit. He was received by grace. He was not received by works of righteousness. He was received without works of righteousness which we have done. Therefore, if the believer is to walk in the same manner as he received the Lord, he will walk according to the promises of God and not according to the precepts of man. This is the *newness of life* to which the believer has been raised with Christ. If, however, the believer were to approach the Word of God on the basis of the performance of the law, he would find himself frustrated and condemned. This is true because the slightest failure at law constitutes guilt before the whole law. This agrees with the statement of James regarding failure in one point of the law. To have any peace at all, this person would have to explain the law away so that he could feel justified; and this is exactly what the Jews did with the traditions of the elders.

Now let us take the same believer and again confront him with his failures before the law.

The Commandments of the Fellowship

The difference now is this: this believer knows he cannot be justified by the deeds of the law. Therefore he does not look to the law for justification. He looks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary for his justification. He claims the promise of God, which declares that faith in Christ provides eternal life without the deeds of the law. He recognizes his judicial position before God. He knows that when Christ died, he was counted to have died with Him. He knows that when Christ was raised from the dead, he is counted to have been raised with Him. He knows that he is, therefore, dead to the law. He knows that he is not under the law. He knows that where there is no law, there is no transgression. Therefore he knows that despite his sins, God is not charging him with sin, because Jesus Christ was charged with his sins on the cross of Calvary. Therefore he knows that he is justified freely by God's grace and thus stands uncondemned. Thus the Word of God has perfected the love of God in him.

This is the individual who is walking in the commandments of God. This is the person who is set apart from the world's system and all of the false confessors under the canopy of Christianity. This is the true child of God.

Chapter VI

WHO IS IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST?

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. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is [passing], and the true light [is already shining]. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in [the] darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in [the] darkness, and walketh in [the] darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because [the] darkness hath blinded his eyes. (I John 2:7-11).

If we recall the previous chapter, we should have the answer to the question posed in our present chapter's heading: *Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?* Chapter five revealed who the true believer is and who the counterfeit believer is, but it is only the true believer who is actually a member of the fellowship of Christ, because it is impossible to fellowship with Christ without spiritual life and (in this age) the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Who quickens the truth of the gospel to those who believe unto salvation, and it is He Who enables the believer to be able to understand the Word of God (I Corinthians 2:9-14). This is a life time process as the individual believer grows in his relationship with the Lord.

So, as we have seen, the true believer operates in the realm of the truth of the Word of

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

God. He believes that what God has promised, He is able also to perform. He recognizes that his relationship with the Lord is entirely a work of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Confidence in this relationship is bolstered by growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord. Thus the believer's understanding of his relationship is established by the Word of God and the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. Further it is the true believer's thanksgiving to God for His love, mercy and grace, shown him in salvation, which motivates him to service, empowered by the Holy Spirit and armed with the spiritual gifts that God has given him. These are exercised by faith within the body of Christ for the edification of the body.

The counterfeit believer gives lip service to the Word of God and to faith in Christ, but ultimately he will deny some aspect of the Person or work of Christ. This is often done in subtle ways from the beginning of his relationship with true believers, but these subtleties may go undetected since believers have a tendency to accept professing believers at face value. We should not be suspicious or cool towards them, but we must also be attuned to the statements of those newly come into our midst. If they are true, they will accept the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God, but if they are false (and continue to operate in unbelief), their duplicity will be revealed.

The counterfeit, because he is a counterfeit, is still steeped in *a way that seemeth right unto a man*. It permeates his thinking. *Wherefore* [our Lord said:] *by their fruits ye shall know them*. But, as in the natural world, when a plant first sprouts, its fruit is not yet manifested. It takes time for a plant to bear its fruit, and though the counterfeit may have been bearing his fruit for some time, it may not be immediately evident when he first comes into our midst, because deception is

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

very much a part of the counterfeit's role in the midst of genuine believers. Therefore John emphasized the believer's relationship to the Word of God:

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. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is [passing], and the true light [is already shining]. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in [the] darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in [the] darkness, and walketh in [the] darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because [the] darkness hath blinded his eyes (I John 2:7-11, emphasis mine).

Once again John has returned to the analogy of the light and the darkness to represent the truth and the error. We have inserted some definite articles in this text where the translators failed to translate them in order to emphasize that all spiritual truth has come from the True and Living God, just as all spiritual error has come from the devil, through the evil tree.

It is interesting to note that the general consensus is that God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden. This is falsely assumed because the Scriptures tell us that God caused the trees of the garden to grow (Genesis 2:9), but we must not stop there. An examination of the Scriptures will reveal that there is sufficient evidence to prove that God did not put the evil tree in the garden. First, by progressive revelation in the parable of the tares and the wheat, the sower was told by his servants that there were tares among the wheat. Even so he told them to let both grow together until the time of harvest. Second, in our Lord's interpretation of the parable, He told His disciples it was an enemy who sowed the tares among the wheat. This implies that it was the enemy who put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden alongside of the tree of life. Third, this implication is corroborated by James, because we

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

know that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a source of temptation to Eve, and James wrote: *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed* (James 1:13-14, emphasis mine). The serpent tempted Eve when he: . . . *said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil* (Genesis 3:4-5). Fourth, John testified that God did not put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden when he wrote: *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 [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was good for food], and the lust of the eyes [the tree was pleasant to the eyes], and the pride of life [the tree was a tree to be desired to make one wise], is not of the Father, but is of the world (I John 2:15-16, emphasis mine; compare Genesis 3:6).*

In this text the word that has been translated *world* is the Greek word *kosmos*. *The kosmos* is the form or fashion of things in this world because of the fall of Adam, whose fall (by implication) was instigated by his love for his wife and not by the deception of the serpent (compare Romans 5:14 with II Corinthians 5:21 and I Timothy 2:14). Therefore the *kosmos* reflects Adam's change from the image of God to one who acted independently of God, thereby gaining a corrupted knowledge of good and evil, which Solomon called: *a way that seemeth right unto a man* This means, as is erroneously assumed, that man does not have his present sense of morality because he was created in the image of God. He has it because, after Eve was

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

deceived and Adam willfully ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam fell from the image of God (Genesis 2:16-17).

It is important for us to realize that the human family does not suffer physical death nor is it born spiritually dead because of its personal sins. It suffers these deaths because of Adam's sin (I Corinthians 15:22), who acted as our federal head when he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Federal headship is the Biblical principle that allows the actions of one individual to stand for an entire class of people (in Adam's case, he stood for the entire human family). Thus Paul wrote: *For the wages of [the] sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans 6:23).

The untranslated definite article before *sin* in this text is very important, because it indicates that spiritual and physical death are the results of Adam's sin (Genesis 2:16-17), not the behavior of his race. The verse also indicates that eternal life is the gift of God by faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:40). So, contrary to what man thinks, neither condemnation nor justification before God is obtained by human behavior. Both are obtained by the actions of a federal head (I Corinthians 15:22), and they are entered into by birth. The first is obtained by natural birth, and the second is obtained by the new birth. Consequently neither of these conditions can be altered by human behavior:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:1-3).

And Isaiah wrote: *But we [Jews] are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses*

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

are as [menstrual] rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities (Isaiah 64:6-7).

There is generally a distinction made between sins and iniquities in the Scriptures. Sins usually speak of fleshly failures before the law, while iniquities are generally used to describe false religious practices or false religious beliefs. The Jews were carried away from the truth that had been committed to their trust (in the law and the sacrificial system, which could have pointed them to faith in Christ) by the traditions (religious practices and interpretations) of the elders, and this gave them a false sense of performing the deeds of the law (Mark 7:13).

These principles of human behavior, called morality, operate in the secular realm and in the religious realm, but they have their source in the evil tree. This is the reason Solomon wrote: *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). If we follow any one of the many ways which have come from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, not one of them can produce spiritual life. Consequently the end thereof is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

Isaiah stated that Israel was as an unclean thing. He then described the unclean thing: all her righteousnesses were as menstrual rags. This is not a very pleasant concept, yet it gives us the key to a very important type in the book of Leviticus. God gave instructions concerning women who were having their normal monthly cycle and those who had an issue of blood that went beyond their normal cycle (Leviticus 15:19-33). The law stated that they were unclean from

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

the time that they began to cast off the blood until seven days after their issue was stanch'd. On the eighth day they were to offer two turtledoves or two pigeons for their cleansing. The spiritual application is obvious: while a woman's body was casting off blood, this was typical of those who deny the efficacy of the blood of Christ as the only way into the presence of God. However, when the sacrifice was made on the eighth day, this was typical of those who have their trust in the sanctifying blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse them from all sin. Since the sacrifice was made on the eighth day, this typified that the one who made the sacrifice was on resurrection ground.

Returning to our text, John did not write a new commandment unto them but an old commandment, which was *the word which ye have heard from the beginning*. The Word declares plainly that we cannot be justified by works of righteousness which we have done (Titus 3:5-7). Therefore the believer must stand in the judicial reckoning of God, motivated by thanksgiving, to serve the Lord in whatever capacity the Lord enables him to do. In this regard, three times in the New Testament we are told: *The just shall live by faith*. In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul added: *And the law is not of faith* We are also told: *. . . for whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Romans 14:23b). Faith is believing that what God has promised, He is able also to perform, and the Word of God declares that Enoch had the testimony that *he pleased God* before he was translated into heaven. The Scripture declares that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. It also declares: *Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*. This is the reason John wrote: *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*

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

(I John 2:7, emphasis mine).

John alluded to a new commandment. This commandment, or word, is predicated upon the fact that *the darkness is past and the true light now shineth*. This verse requires a view of the Greek. Two participles are used. Thus the verse should read: *the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining*. *The darkness* in this text is an indirect reference to Israel, who was supposed to be a light shining upon a lampstand. Nevertheless, Israel's light was under a bushel. This left them in darkness. This is not the darkness that comes with night. It is the spiritual darkness that comes from the lie of the devil. Clearly, Israel was operating in the darkness because they were ignorant of God's righteousness and were trying to establish their own righteousness. Therefore our Lord said to certain Jews who had rejected the truth:

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, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh [the] lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it [i.e., the singular lie spoken by the serpent]. (John 8:43-44)

Earlier we quoted another statement of our Lord's regarding light and darkness. He said: *If the light that is in thee be [the] darkness, how great is the darkness*. Thus, despite being the custodians of the light, Israel was not operating in the light. She was operating in the darkness. This means that John's statement about the darkness passing was a reference to the ensuing judgment of the Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem. Even so, the world would not be without a testimony to the light. This would be maintained by the New Testament church, which our Lord established and empowered. If there was any light at all left in Jewry, it would continue with the light from the New Testament church until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. After that,

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

the sole testimony to the truth of the saving grace of God would be in the church.

This means that John wrote his three epistles before the destruction of Jerusalem, while *the darkness was passing*. So, at the writing of First John, the church was *already shining* as the custodian of the truth of the gospel. We must remember that all of the first members of the church were Jews, who converted to Christianity; but because they had converted, they were no longer regarded as Jews, for in Christ: *There is neither Jew nor Greek . . .*

These believers had experienced the hatred that John alluded to in chapter two, because when a Jew would convert to Christianity, his family would regard him as dead. He would be excommunicated from the synagogue. If he worked in a Jewish community, he would lose his job. No Jew in good standing in the synagogue would have anything to do with an excommunicated Jew. Their natural ties as brothers made no difference. Thus it was those in the darkness that hated those in the light; albeit the darkness thought it was in the light:

He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in [the] darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in [the] darkness, and walketh in [the] darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that [the] darkness hath blinded his eyes. (I John 2:9-11).

The Galatian heresy propagated by the Judaizers demanded that Gentile believers be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. This was a corruption of the message of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This heresy was so prevalent that there is hardly an epistle in the New Testament where it is not alluded to directly or indirectly. The apostles battled it constantly. We are still battling it today. The only difference with the heresy today is that the ritual has changed. In the early church there was the demand for the ritual of circumcision, whereas in present-day churches

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

the demand is for baptism as an essential aspect of salvation. Consequently the darkness was and is not confined to Jews only.

Then, as now, there is still the insistence that the believer prove his salvation by performing the deeds of the law. Attempts at law-keeping produce other false teachings such as absolution, indulgences, confession, the mass, the denial of the eternal security of the believer, the necessity of being saved again, the suppression of the old nature, the eradication of the old nature, and many, many others. Congregations, then and now, were made up of individuals who were not all genuine believers in Jesus Christ. They all gave lip service to Christ. They claimed they believed in Him, but their false doctrines denied Him.

Ironically, it was those who claimed they were keeping the law (*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*) who persecuted those who held strictly to the grace of God for salvation. They were clearly walking in the darkness, which came upon man because he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Those who have their trust in human goodness are always the ones who do the persecuting. Law persecutes grace; it is never the other way around. Therefore the apostle Paul wrote: *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now* (Galatians 4:28-29).

In the allegory in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians, Paul declared that Hagar, Ishmael, Mount Sinai, the earthly Jerusalem, and the flesh were all used to describe that which was under the law and legalistic. So when Ishmael persecuted Isaac on the day of his weaning, that was a portrayal of how those who are under the law persecute those who are under

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

grace. This is borne out throughout the Scriptures, and the situation is never reversed.

Even though it should have been evident to this point, we have not stated that the lie, the sin, the iniquity, and the darkness have been used synonymously throughout the New Testament. This is especially true in the writings of the apostle John. Likewise, the truth, the righteousness, and the light are all used synonymously. Therefore, when a man is religious and thinks that he is in the light, yet he operates in the principles that derived from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he is not in the light. He is in the darkness. When he is told that his principles of morality cannot make him fit for God's presence, he invariably becomes angry, even to the point of striking violently at the one who has told him his morality is not acceptable to God. This, after all, is what Cain did with Abel.

Contrasted with this, we have the behavior of the true believer. Sometimes it is not what it should be. Sometimes there are failures, because the true believer has not lost the sin nature he received from Adam when the believer accepted the Lord as his Savior. These points of failure will invariably bring accusations. Nevertheless the accusations cannot alter what God has said. The true believer stands firmly in the truth of the Word of God:

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 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. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (II Corinthians 4:1-7)

Who Is in the Fellowship of Christ?

John made it plain, the true believer operates on the basis of what God has said and not on the basis of man-made rules of touch not, taste not, and handle not. The apostle Paul also declared that all of those things would *perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men.*

It is easy to misunderstand our terms. With our insistence that man cannot improve his status with God with moral behavior, it is easy to think we are advocating amoral, or immoral behavior. This, of course, is not true. The believer's behavior is governed by the constraining love of Christ. Christ's love in grace begets reciprocal love in faith, because of thanksgiving. The primary manifestation of the love of Christ is the concern the true believer has for the spiritual state of his fellowman. The true believer does not view man on the basis of his behavior. He views him either in Christ or out of Christ. That is, he views man as saved or lost. It is not the believer's place to judge man on the basis of sinful behavior.

Thus the genuine believer manifests the love of Christ to the world by the proclamation of the gospel. It is the gospel that shows forth the love that requires a man to love his neighbor as himself, and it is Christ alone Who has that love. At a personal level, it was faith in the truth of the gospel that made me fit for the presence of the Lord. It was not on the basis of personal acts of righteousness. Therefore, it should be my desire that all men receive the same grace that I have been privileged to receive. I should see them with no more capacity to satisfy God by righteous acts than I could. This is how the love of Christ is expressed by the true believer. This is the truth of the statement, *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.*

Chapter VII

WRITING TO THE FELLOWSHIP

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

In our introduction we mentioned that the order of the writing of the three epistles of John does not correspond to the numbering assigned in the titles. It should be obvious that John did not number his epistles one, two and three. So at what point in history were the numbers added and by whom? I have never found a satisfactory answer to these questions, but it seems that whoever added the numbers did so without regard to the contexts of the epistles. It also seems that their primary concern was with the length of the epistles. This may have been the rationale for the numbering, because First John is the longest of the three epistles, and Second and Third John are approximately the same length. Thus, like the chapter and verse divisions of our Bible, the numbers assigned to the epistles are convenient references, but otherwise they have no Scriptural

Writing to the Fellowship

authority.

When John wrote the epistle we know as First John, he addressed several groups within the particular church to whom he wrote. In the first chapter of his first epistle he used the pronoun *we*, which included himself, the church to whom he wrote, and by interpretation all of professing Christendom. Later, in the first verse of the second chapter, John addressed a specific group with the term *My little children*. We have seen that this was a reference to the *born ones* of John. They undoubtedly were converts who were saved under John's ministry. Finally, in the portion of Scripture now under consideration, John wrote:

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, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written [i.e., I wrote] unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written [i.e., I wrote] unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. (I John 2:12-14, emphasis mine)

In this text for some inexplicable reason the translators translated a past-tense verb with a past-perfect tense verb. Thus they translated *I wrote* as *I have written*. There is a significant difference. One refers to a past-completed action, while the other refers to an action that started in the past but continues. If I were to say, *I have written*, that can be an extension of what I am presently doing. However if I were to say, *I wrote*, then the action of my writing is over. Thus when John addressed the fathers and the young men, he actually said, *I wrote unto you*, rather than, *I have written unto you*. This suggests that John had written to them prior to the epistle called First John. An examination of John's writings suggests that he *wrote* to the fathers and young men when he wrote Second John. Thus, in Second John, he wrote:

Writing to the Fellowship

The elder unto the elect lady and her children [i.e., a local church], whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth, as we have received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though [I am writing] a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister [i.e., a sister church] greet thee. Amen. (II John 1:1-13, emphasis mine)

A quick perusal of this epistle reveals that John wrote it to a sister church to encourage them to walk in the truth. He addressed the church as *the elect lady and her children*. John wished to reveal to *the elect lady and her children* that by walking in the truth they would be fulfilling the commandment to love one another. It was necessary for them to show forth this kind of love, because there were many deceivers in the world. John also wished to reveal to them that the deceiver is one who does not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. That is, he is one who is not in agreement with God about the first advent of Jesus Christ. This is a denial of the purpose of the first advent of our Lord. So, in most cases, the counterfeit believers were involved with the *other gospel* of the Galatian heresy. Therefore they had enlisted the necessity of law and ritual to produce salvation, whereas the true believers in the church to whom John

Writing to the Fellowship

wrote would have understood that Christ came in His first advent to offer Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

John wished to warn this church that there was the possibility that they could lose some of their rewards if they were to succumb to the deception of the deceivers. The Scriptures teach, *The just shall live by faith[,] And the law is not of faith* Paul declared, *That whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* And the new covenant states, *Their sins and iniquities will I remember against them no more.* Thus, at the judgment seat of Christ, one cannot be rewarded for any service that was not accomplished by faith, because anything that was not of faith is covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, never to be remembered again.

This reveals that the deception of the counterfeits was the same as it was from the beginning; it was the fruit of the evil tree, *a way that seemeth right unto a man.* Thus it was the placement of man's morality in the place of the blood of Christ for acceptance with God. Therefore John wished to warn them that if anyone came to them who did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, this individual was not to be received into their fellowship, lest they should become a partaker of his evil deeds, which, of course, were called *good works* by those who performed them.

John closed his letter quickly. Its contents were merely an outline of some of the things he wished to speak of to this sister church. John knew that if he could approach them at a personal level, the errors that were prevalent and the deceivers which were many could be exposed. He then closed with a greeting from the children of *thy elect sister*, which was probably John's home church. Thus the contents and structure of Second John, along with the structure and contents of

Writing to the Fellowship

his other epistles, convinces me that Second John was written first in the series of John's epistles, but it appears, due to rather strange circumstances, that it was not received by the church (III John 1:9). Demetrius, who was the bearer of the epistle, was not allowed to deliver it to *the elect lady and her children* because of Diotrephes.

Nevertheless, when rebuffed by Diotrephes, Demetrius found solace with Gaius, a convert and beloved friend of John. Demetrius spent some time with Gaius, and then he returned to John and conveyed all that had transpired. It was then that John wrote a second epistle (which we know as Third John) and sent it to Gaius by the hand of Demetrius. It is possible because of these circumstances that Gaius actually received both Second and Third John from Demetrius at the same time. If this is true, it is possible that it was Gaius who ended up delivering the undelivered epistle of Second John to the church (III John 1:9), and if both of these epistles were read by the church at the same time, they might have broken the hold Diotrephes had on the church. Consider Third John:

The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Writing to the Fellowship

Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true. I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name. (III John 1:1-14, emphasis mine)

Reflecting back, when John sent the letter (which we call Second John) to the elect lady, he did not post it as we do. Letters were posted in those days by sending them by special messenger (in this case Demetrius and other brethren) or with someone who was traveling that way. Likewise the response was returned by the same messenger or other travelers. These were the brethren John alluded to in his third epistle. Thus, according to Third John, when Demetrius arrived with the epistle we know as Second John, Diotrephes refused him audience before the church. We do not know what position Diotrephes held in the church, nor do we know how he came to wield such power; but we know that he wielded his power without regard to the authority of the Word of God and the good testimony of men like Demetrius.

It is interesting to note that the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes had spread rapidly throughout the churches of the first century (Revelation 2:15). This doctrine restricted the authority of the man of God, making him subject to the will of the people. I have always thought it strange that many churches will not allow their pastors (men called and equipped of God) their God-given authority as shepherds of their flocks, but these same churches never seem to think twice about subjecting themselves to the unscrupulous power of men like Diotrephes.

In contrast with Diotrephes, Gaius was a true believer who was walking in the truth. He was one of those men in the church of whom John had written: *I rejoiced greatly that I found thy children walking in the truth.* Conversely, Diotrephes was a deceiver and an antichrist. He was

Writing to the Fellowship

walking in the lie. He was one of those types of individuals who caused John to write to this church to encourage it to walk in the commandments of God: *For many deceivers are entered into the world.* Thus Gaius was doing the good, while Diotrephes was doing the evil.

At this point, an analysis of the word translated *doing* is necessary. It is the Greek word *poieo*. *Poieo* means to make or to do. Consequently John used it in the sense of *making something one's own*. Thus Gaius had made *the good* (Christ's righteousness) his own, so that he walked in the truth of the gospel, not trying to establish his own righteousness, but resting in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Conversely, Diotrephes had made *the evil* his own. Thus he walked according to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: *a way that seemeth right unto a man* It seems, with the little that we know of Diotrephes, that few men were suitable for his presence according to his sense of self-righteousness, for he would not receive Demetrius who had the endorsement of the apostle John (III John 1:12). Thus he was apparently very much like the Pharisee in the temple. He was steeped in his own righteousness and rejected anyone who proclaimed the grace of God. Diotrephes opposed support for the brethren who were proclaiming the gospel in all of the world. He was not only self-righteous, he was self-serving. Once he had gained control of the church, he held it with an iron hand of self-righteous hypocrisy.

In both Second and Third John, John expressed his desire to see this church face-to-face, because he had many things to say to them. It appears that he was never able to do this. We do not know what prevented John from seeing them face-to-face; perhaps, it was John's exile to the island of Patmos, but it seems that First John was written in lieu of the desired face-to-face

Writing to the Fellowship

meeting, because the many things John desired to say to them were said in First John. It should be apparent, then, that the order of the writing of the epistles was Second John first, Third John second and First John last. Since we have discovered the plausible order of the writing of the epistles, we can return to an exposition of the things John wrote about to the little children, the young men and the fathers in the epistle called First John.

John addressed the little children in verse twelve of the second chapter of First John. He did not literally address little children when he used the term *teknion*. He addressed the *born ones*, or the young converts, to Christ. Therefore these individuals were much younger spiritually than the others addressed. Nevertheless John's letter was for their understanding as much as it was for the more mature ones in the church. So John told them, *Your sins are forgiven for his name's sake*. This remains a present-tense continuous condition.

Even so one of the things which causes many believers and especially young believers some problems is the matter of the forgiveness of sins. Most believers understand that their past sins were forgiven when they trusted Christ as their Savior. Nevertheless they can have some problems with their understanding of present and future sins. There can be some confusion until they are properly instructed about the extent of the atonement, but this is sometimes lacking.

It is not surprising, then, that false prophets love to work in this area of misunderstanding. This can be a very fruitful field for them. We have already seen that the false teacher, or the counterfeit Christian, often denies the sin nature. Therefore the matter of present and future sins is approached by some by simply denying their existence. Thus John wrote: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (I John 1:8). This verse, as we have

Writing to the Fellowship

already seen, declares that the true believer still retains his sin nature, and he will not deny it when he sees it in himself. Therefore anyone who denies his sin nature, shows by such a denial that he is not in the truth -- that is, he is not in Christ.

John declared that the present-tense confession of sins provided these *born ones* with a past-tense forgiveness and cleansing from all unrighteousness. Both the present and past-tense verbs in I John 1:9, as we have seen, are in the subjunctive mood. This means that if one confesses his sins in the present-tense (at the time of his salvation), then this will provide a past-tense forgiveness and cleansing (at the time of Christ's sacrifice on the cross of Calvary), because Christ made one sacrifice for sin forever. Thus John's purpose for addressing these believers was a reassurance that their sins are forgiven.

John addressed the fathers after he addressed the little children. The fathers is derived from the Greek word *pater*. It implies that these men could have produced the little children. That is, these men were some of the spiritually older individuals in the church who may have had the privilege of leading certain ones to become *little children* in Christ. To be absolutely correct, no man can save another man's soul. However every believer has the capacity to lead an individual to Christ. That is, they can bring them under the sound of the truth of the gospel, so that through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God the lost can be saved. Thus the apostle Paul said: *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase* (I Corinthians 3:6). This means that the fathers were those individuals who had matured to the level where they could proclaim the truth of the Word of God. Consequently, John alluded to their understanding of the eternity of Christ. These were not babes. These were mature ones

Writing to the Fellowship

in Christ.

Many people can parrot doctrines. They have read or heard deep truths expressed, and they can give lip service to some of them, but this does not assure that they are redeemed, for our Lord said: *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men* (Mark 7:6-7). Even so, they can be very convincing. I once sat under the ministry of a man who read his sermons. He did not use notes, he used a script, and he was very good at delivering the contents of that script as if it was from his heart. When I first heard him, his messages from the book of Galatians were sound and true. Even so, with the passage of time, he came to undermine all that he had preached from the book of Galatians. Only God knows whether he actually believed the things he preached from Galatians or whether he merely scripted them from fundamentally sound sources.

To my mind, the question was settled after not seeing him for many years. We happened to meet one day in a restaurant and he asked me, *Are you still preaching that grace stuff?* I answered, *Yes! What else is there?* That ended our conversation. Many years later, I met him again on a golf course. He was playing as a single and wanted to know if he could join our twosome. I didn't recognize him at first, but when we shook hands and exchanged first names, I recognized him and introduced him to my playing partner. He never spoke another word to me during the round, and he walked with my playing partner rather than with me. I guess the *grace stuff* I still preach made him a bit uncomfortable. These events caused me to remember a statement he used to make often when talking about old age. He would say, *When you consider*

Writing to the Fellowship

the alternative, old age isn't so bad. Was this the statement of a man who had his trust in the Lord? The alternative to old age is death, and death for the believer means to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and to depart and be with Christ is far better.

The man I have just written about was my elder in years. I doubt that he was my elder in understanding. During our eight-year association, I taught two separate classes during the two preaching services on Sunday morning, so I only heard him preach during the Wednesday and Sunday night services. I never heard him directly deny the Person or the work of Christ, but his remarks to me about that *grace stuff* have given me pause. Further, his son (who is pastor of a large church) wrote an article denying the blood of Christ as the basis of our salvation. He insisted that it was the death of Christ and not the blood of Christ that provided an atonement for sin. When others publicly challenged his son, his father never did. This, too, has given me pause. I have not written these things to be mean spirited. I have written them to show the difficulty in sometimes recognizing counterfeit Christians with whom we may be acquainted. John wrote to the fathers. This, in and of itself, suggests that these men were spiritual elders. It also suggests that they walked in the truth, like Demetrius and Gaius. Nevertheless, considering the power Diotrephes wielded, he also would have fallen into the category of being an elder. He certainly was not a spiritual elder. He was steeped in the flesh and loved to have the preeminence among men, but for some unknown reason the people yielded to his dominance.

The fact that a Christian is mature in years does not automatically mean he is mature in the things of the Lord. None of us understands all of the truth of the Word of God -- it is impossible for the finite to encompass the Infinite. Solomon said that God's thoughts were like the sand.

Writing to the Fellowship

That is, God's thoughts are so numerous, none of us in this lifetime will ever fathom them all. Thus John was not the least bit presumptuous to address the fathers with spiritual truth they might not have known. The truth is, the sharing of truth is one of the primary reasons for fellowship. It is a sad thing when a man thinks that no one can show him anything from the Word of God that he does not already know. The individuals who think this way will soon dry up spiritually. They will cease to learn anything new, because they have become *wise in [their] own conceit*.

It is so very important that genuine believers have fellowship with one another and with the father and the Son. If we do not have this kind of fellowship, we shall very soon cease to grow. God never intended Christians to live isolated lives, without fellowship. This is one of the reasons Christ established the church and then told us, through the writer of the book of Hebrews, *Not to forsake the assembling of [ourselves] together, as the manner of some is*.

Spiritual maturity is not directly related to age. It can be, but it does not have to be. For example, an older person can accept the Lord as his Savior. In terms of his age, he may be the oldest person in the church. Yet in terms of spiritual maturity, at the time of his salvation, he is the youngest person in the church. Thus John's address to fathers and young men does not tell us anything about their numerical age. These are terms denoting spiritual growth.

Likewise, spiritual growth does not coincide linearly with the length of time an individual is a believer. One may be a believer for a considerable period of time and yet remain a babe. Spiritual growth comes with sound teaching at regular intervals, spiritual interest, and spiritual exercise. Thus it is quite possible for one to be quite young in years but very mature spiritually. This is one of the reasons Paul told Timothy, *Let no man despise thy youth*.

Writing to the Fellowship

Thus when John addressed the *young men*, he addressed those who were of an age, spiritually, to go to war. In the natural realm, it is the young men who fight our wars. Therefore John addressed the warriors of the faith when he addressed the young men. This is reflected in his statement to them: *I write unto you young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.* Overcome is *nikao* in the Greek. It is a word which means to conquer, thus it speaks of spiritual warfare. These men were soul winners. They had *snatched brands from the burning*. The gates of hell were unable to withstand their onslaught as they preached the truth of the Word of God. Thus the young men were militantly involved in the furtherance of the gospel.

If we are to understand the Word of God, we must not forget what God said to the prophet Samuel. God reminded Samuel not to look for a king in Israel by considering his height or his good looks, because *man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart*. To this our Lord added: *It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life.* The apostle Paul also wrote: *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Corinthians 2:14). This, then, is the reason the natural man does not understand the things of God. This is why the things of God are foolishness unto him. Nevertheless, they are precious unto us who are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ and indwelt by God's Holy Spirit.

Chapter VIII

ETERNAL FELLOWSHIP: LOVE NOT 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. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (I John 2:15-17)

The true believer has fellowship with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and with the saints. This fellowship, as we have seen, is predicated upon agreement with God about the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in His first advent upon this earth, because John wrote: *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* (I John 4:2-3, emphasis mine).

In this text the meaning of the Greek word *homologeō*, translated *confesseth*, provides the key to understanding the text. While *confess* in English means to admit, *homologeō* means, as we have previously seen, to be in agreement with another. The obvious other in the Scriptures is the Holy Spirit. It was He Who by inspiration caused holy men chosen of God to write the Scriptures

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

(II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21). Thus the Spirit of God's testimony concerning the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, through the preaching of the Word of God (by men called and equipped of God) and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, has produced the only viable way of reestablishing the fellowship between God and man, broken by the fall. All other alleged ways of restoring fellowship with God fall into the category of those who are not in agreement with God, as John stated in the later part of this verse: . . . *and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.* In addition to this testimony, our Lord told Thomas and the other apostles the night before His crucifixion: *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6).

This statement is self-evident to the believer, because the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ is God. He became a man by means of the virgin birth (Matthew 1:23). Thus, as the God-Man, He did what no other man could possibly do. He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law and all righteousness. Then, at the time established before the foundation of the world (Galatians 4:4-5), He offered Himself as the only suitable sacrifice for sin, shedding His blood to make an atonement for sin (Hebrews 9:22). He was crucified at the hands of the Jews and the Romans, bearing the curse of the sins of the whole world (Galatians 3:13); He was buried; and He arose again the third day to provide the victory over sin, death and the grave. Consequently He told His disciples before His death: . . . *because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:19).

Contrary to what many believe, it did not take a prolonged period of time for the truth to be supplanted by the many other ways of the fruit of the evil tree. Thus, as in the garden of Eden, error jumped into the churches full-grown. If we read the seven letters John wrote to seven

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

churches in Asia (Revelation 2:1 to 3:22), we will see that five of the seven churches addressed were in a state of apostasy at the time that John wrote to them.

An examination of internal evidence in the Revelation will show that the conditions that existed in these churches existed before the death of Nero in 68 A.D. We know this because John was told: *And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman [Rome] sitteth. And there are seven kings [i.e., Roman rulers]: five are fallen [Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius], and one is [Nero], and the other is not yet come [Vespasian]; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space* (Revelation 17:9-10, insertions mine). Thus, before the death of Nero in 68 A.D., the spirit of antichrist was already in the world, so that the newly formed churches had to contend with many false prophets.

This can be seen in the fact that Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians to counteract the heresy of the Judaizers. This heresy came to his attention in Antioch of Syria after his first missionary journey into Asia. Paul had begun his first missionary journey about six years earlier, shortly after returning to Antioch after the death of Herod in 44 A.D. (Acts 12:20-13:4). The amount of time between Paul's ministry in Asia and the preaching of *another gospel* by the Judaizers is unknown, but we know that they taught the Gentiles that they had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses or they could not be saved (Acts 15:5).

John wrote about the same kind of men within the ranks of the Jews when he wrote the gospel that bears his name. He said that these men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. When we consider that their deeds *outwardly appeared righteous unto men*, this tells us something about the source of their deeds, because their deeds were a

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

facade of righteousness. Consequently the source of their deeds was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which gave them the concept that they could be like God through their personal moral behavior.

John's confrontation with Diotrephes was not personal. It was based upon the evil words that Diotrephes had spoken against the truth. Diotrephes openly defamed the brethren, and he would not receive an epistle written by John and delivered by Demetrius. In that epistle, as we have seen, John expressed a desire to speak to the brethren face-to-face. Therefore when John wrote to Gaius (Third John), he said: *Beloved follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God* (III John 1:11).

It is important for us to note in the Greek text of this Scripture, evil and good are both singular, and they are both preceded by the definite article. Therefore John wrote of the singular source of *the evil* and the singular source of *the good*. Later, when John wrote the epistle we call First John, the words of Diotrephes (related to him by Demetrius) must have continued to resound in his ears, because Diotrephes had gained the rule over *the elect lady and her children*, whom John loved in the truth. Thus, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, when John was hindered from seeing this church face-to-face, he was moved by the Holy Spirit to pen the epistle we know as First John. In this epistle John wrote to counteract the evil ministry of Diotrephes by revealing the Spirit of the truth and the spirit of the error. The first step in this process was to reveal the source of the error, and this brings us to consider the Scripture we quoted at the beginning of this chapter:

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

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

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. (I John 2:15-17, emphasis mine)

If we are to truly understand these verses, we must go back to the account of the deception of Eve in the garden of Eden. We must carefully observe all that the serpent said to her and how she answered him. This will reveal some details that have been missed by many who have read the account of the fall of Adam and Eve:

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. (Genesis 3:1-7, emphasis mine)

We posed the premise in an earlier chapter that the Lord did not put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden. It is commonly assumed that the Lord did place that tree there, because other relevant Scriptures are not considered. Therefore we posed the premise that it was the devil who placed it there and not God. We also posed the premise that man's present sense of morality did not come because he was created in the image of God, but he has a corrupted sense of morality because he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore we posed the premise that man's morality is corrupted by its source. The verses that we have quoted from our present text in First John will provide us with the information we need

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

to establish the validity of our propositions.

John emphasized the importance of walking after the commandments of God. We have seen that this is a walk according to the truth of the Word of God. If Adam and Eve had walked according to the Word of God, Eve would not have been deceived by the lie of the devil, because God provided them with all of the information they needed: *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof [dying thou shalt die]* (Genesis 2:16-17, emphasis mine).

Eve's strength against the lie of the devil was the Word of God. So, with his subtlety, the serpent said, *Yea, hath God said?* Thus the devil operated the same way then as he operates now. He deceived Eve by casting doubt upon the Word of God. Nearly four thousand years after the incident in the garden, the devil sought to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ using the same method that he had used with Eve (Hebrews 4:15). So, when our Lord had been forty days and forty nights without food in the wilderness, the devil sought to tempt Him by misusing the Word of God. Nevertheless our Lord defeated him with a proper use of the Word of God, as can be seen in the account in Matthew 4:1-11.

Thus, if we are to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, we must be clothed with the armor of God. Our head must be protected with the *helmet of salvation*; our heart with the *breastplate of righteousness*; our whole person protected with *the shield of faith*; our feet (which represent our walk) must be *shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*; and for our offense as well as our defense, we must be armed with *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* (see Ephesians 6:10-18).

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

We know that our Lord defeated the devil in the wilderness with the Word of God. Therefore, in our battle against the wiles of the devil, believers must know the Word of God. It is not enough for the believer to be able to quote isolated verses of Scripture, because as can be seen in the temptation of Eve the devil used the Word of God out of context to deceive her. It is important, then, that all believers understand that a portion of Scripture wrested from its context forms a pretext. So if the Word of God is to be both an offensive and defensive weapon in the hand of a believer, it must be rightly divided according to its immediate as well as its overall context in the Scriptures. This means that before an application can be drawn from Scripture, the author and his audience must be considered so that we know who is speaking and to whom. We must also know the covenant relationship of the audience, because about two-thirds of the Bible was written during the covenant of the law. It is also important for the believer to understand that the covenant of the law was fulfilled perfectly and completely by our Lord, so that the law has been abrogated for the new covenant.

Eve made a very foolish mistake when the serpent said: *Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* She tried to strengthen her position by adding to the Word of God. Therefore she said: *God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.* Thus she foolishly added to the prohibition and lessened the punishment. This made her vulnerable to the wiles of the devil. Then the serpent countered her feeble defense by saying: *Ye shall not surely die: for God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil.*

This statement contains all of the precepts of *another gospel*. First, the serpent denied the

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

consequence of death. Thus in essence he promised her life. Second, the serpent denied her created status in the image of God. He did this by promising that if she would eat of the fruit of the tree she would be like God (Elohim). Third, since she was deceived, this means that she did not analyze the statements of the serpent in the light of the Word of God. If she had done so she would have realized that it would be impossible to be like God by disobeying God.

During her conversation with the serpent, there were three things about the tree that attracted her. First, she saw that the tree was good for food, which from our text in First John is *the lust of the flesh*. Second, she saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, which from our text is *the lust of the eyes*. Third, she saw that the tree was a tree to be desired to make one wise, which from our text is *the pride of life*. Thus everything that Eve observed in the tree is described by John as *the world*, which he commanded the believer not to love.

In the Greek text this is *kosmos*, which is the order of things since the fall of man. Consequently John told believers not to love the present order of things. Everything in the *kosmos* had its beginning (as far as man is concerned) in the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This becomes self-evident when we realize that man's self-determination of right and wrong is the purported method of entering the realm of God by the religions of the *kosmos*. Nevertheless John wrote: *For all that is in the [kosmos], the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the [kosmos]* (I John 2:16, emphasis mine). This confirms our premise. All that is in the world's system is not of the Father. This means that man cannot be accepted of God on the basis of that which separated him from God.

We have learned that Adam was the federal head of the human family. We have also

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

learned that Adam fell from his original created state in the image of God to a fallen state with a sin nature. So by procreation Adam has produced in his posterity a race of people that is born into this world dead in trespasses and in sin and also under the sentence of physical death. Therefore the nature that Adam received by disobedience to God has been passed on to the entire human family by the principle of federal headship. This means that sin is not a product of man's environment -- it is the product of his fallen nature.

We also know that Jesus Christ is represented in Scripture by the tree of life. Therefore the individual that comes to Him for life is judicially declared (by virtue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit) to have died with Christ, to have been buried with Christ, to have been raised from the dead with Christ, and to have an inheritance that is incorruptible and fadeth not away. While these things are judicially true, this individual will not actually be like Christ until he is raised, glorified and adopted into the family of God (I John 3:1-2). Therefore God has given the believer His Holy Spirit to indwell him as an earnest, or pledge, that God will fulfill all that He has promised. Thus Paul wrote:

The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (I Corinthians 15:47-49)

In the previous chapter we learned the meaning of the Greek word *poieo*. John used it in the sense of making something one's own. Thus Christ's righteousness, by the doctrine of imputation, can be made to be one's own. This means that the believer never stands before God in his own righteousness. Man's righteousness is unacceptable because God demands perfection. Therefore the believer stands in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:21)

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

from the moment that (through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God) he trusts Jesus Christ as his Savior.

The false prophet, who operates in the spirit of the error, does not agree with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This individual may seem to agree with a great deal of truth regarding our Lord Jesus Christ, but at some point of doctrine there will be a denial. In this regard, we must remember *that no lie is of the truth*. Therefore the non-confession can be very subtle.

John tells us that the counterfeit spirits speak of the world, and the world hears them. We have seen that the world is the kosmos, which is the order of things since the fall of Adam and Eve. This identification ties the kosmos to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. John used a definite article before *error* in the fourth chapter of his epistle, so this confirms this connection, because the false prophet speaks according to the spirit of the error. Thus the singular error was that Adam gained a knowledge of good and evil by his singular sin of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. John also revealed that there are far more people who think according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil than there are those who think according to the Spirit of the truth.

This can pose a problem for the man of God, because numerical success is not necessarily proof of the approval and blessings of God. Since many more people think according to the spirit of the error than think according to the Spirit of the truth, it is very likely that if a man preaches according to the truth of the Word of God his ministry will remain relatively small. However if the preacher moralizes the people to whom he preaches, it is likely that his ministry will be

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

numerically more successful than otherwise. Consequently the apostle Paul wrote Timothy: *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition* (I Timothy 6:9, emphasis mine). To this, our Lord added: *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it* (Matthew 7:13-14).

Everyone in the world's system agrees with the principles of morality (no matter how varied) as the basis for acceptance with God. However Biblical Christianity shows us that there is no one who is truly moral. Mankind needs a Savior. Therefore the apostle Paul wrote: *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 [Spirit]; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3:3-7).

After John established that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life were not of the Father, he told the church: *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever* (I John 2:17). In this verse John used a participle to describe the world and the Greek word *poieo* in the form of a participle for *doeth*. This means that he said, *The world is passing away, and the lust thereof: but he who is making the will of God his own abides forever.*

Eternal Fellowship: Love Not the World

This verse is one of many that establishes the eternal security of the believer. The believer's security is not based upon dead, self-righteous works. It is based upon the sure Word of God. Thus John puts to silence those empty arguments requiring the morality of man to work hand-in-hand with the grace of God. Since grace is unmerited favor, such an argument is a contradiction of terms. This verse also establishes the term of the believer's fellowship with the Father by use of the present-tense verb *abides* with the word *forever*. This means that the believer has present-tense, eternal fellowship with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the saints.

Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

Chapter IX

NON-FELLOWSHIP: THE ANTICHRIST SYSTEM

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. 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. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

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. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also (I John 2:18-23).

In the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord spoke seven parables to the Jews and His disciples that shall find their fulfillment during the church age. The second of these parables was the parable of the tares and the wheat. The wheat (by our Lord's interpretation) represents the children of the kingdom, and the tares which are spurious wheat represent the children of the wicked one. Interestingly, tares and wheat look alike until they begin bearing their fruits. Therefore, speaking of false prophets, our Lord said: *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them* (Matthew 7:20). The fruits of the false prophets cannot be their conduct as is commonly taught, because it is impossible to distinguish between the good conduct of a false

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

prophet and the good conduct of a true prophet. This is made evident by our Lord's description of the scribes and Pharisees: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity* (Matthew 23:27-28, emphasis mine). Our Lord also told the Jews *except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:20). Therefore the fruits of the false prophets and true prophets, or counterfeit believers and true believers, must be what each deems to be the source of his righteousness before God.

The false prophet, because of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, deems the source of his righteousness to be the performance of his understanding of right and wrong, *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). Thus, by way of contrast, the true prophet knows he is a sinner; he knows that *there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20); he knows, *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in [God's] sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin* (Romans 3:20); therefore he knows that the source of his righteousness before God can only be by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. He knows these things because Jesus Christ stood in his stead in life, fulfilling every jot and title of the law, and He stood in his stead in death as his Kinsman Redeemer, providing him with His perfect righteousness. Therefore his trust is in the perfect and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which far exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

The tares present a disturbing picture. By analysis they are professing Christians, but as in our Lord's parable they cannot be identified as counterfeits until they bear their fruits. So these people come into our churches and sit in the pews; they come to our functions; they shake our hands and smile; they pass the time of day; they put up a facade of being in accord with our ministries; they profess to be our brothers and sisters in Christ, or at least they give the impression that they are; but according to our Lord's parable -- when they bear their fruits it will be seen that they are children of the wicked one and not children of God.

We must make a distinction between children of the wicked one and ordinary lost individuals, because it is commonly taught that there are just two classes of people in this world -- children of the kingdom and children of the wicked one. Those who teach this overlook an obvious third class from our Lord's parable. Paul called this class of people *children of wrath* (Ephesians 2:3) or *children of [the] disobedience* (Ephesians 5:6). This third class of unsaved people make up the world (the field) where *the gospel* (the wheat) and *another gospel* (the tares) are preached (or sown). The preaching of these two gospels in the world produces children of the wicked one from the one seed and children of the kingdom from the other seed. Therefore it must be understood that in order for children of wrath to become children of the wicked one, they must consciously reject the truth of the gospel and accept the lie of the *other gospel* in lieu of the truth. Those who do not make such a choice, but simply continue in *a way that seemeth right unto a man* remain children of wrath. They are neither tares nor wheat, they are the field. Thus our Lord said: *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God* (John 3:18).

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

When counterfeit Christians (tares) come into a church that has a strong pulpit ministry of preaching and teaching the truth of the Word of God, with the members well established in the fundamentals of the faith, ordinarily they will not stay long. Remember, John wrote: *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* However, if they can find a church where the ministry is weak and the people poorly taught, they will enter as wolves in sheep's clothing to do their nefarious work. This does not mean that they will not try to undermine a strong ministry, but under a weak ministry they can be assured that they will not soon be exposed. Thus they have their greatest successes where a ministry is more interested in large attendances, popularity in the community, and the wealth that comes from such a ministry rather than in hearing the truth of the Word of God. Usually these ministries wish to accept everyone. Numbers are very important to them. Consequently doctrine is minimized so as not to offend anyone. Both the pastor and the people in such a ministry confuse weakness with love. This makes them very susceptible to infiltration by false prophets, both in the pulpit and in the pew.

In such an environment it will not be long before the wolves in sheep's clothing will bring forth fruit from the evil tree. They will endeavor to pass this fruit off as worship, love or the truth of the Word of God. When there are genuine believers in such an environment; and if they attempt to rebut the fruit from the evil tree; and if the number of counterfeits exceeds the number of genuine believers, the true believers will be ignored, censured or driven from the church for being *without Christian love*. Then full apostasy can ensue. If this occurs, the church will end up operating after *the commandments and doctrines of men* and no longer be a testimony to the

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

truth.

Paul warned the Corinthians of such a possibility: *Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present . . . a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well [resist] him* (II Corinthians 11:1-4, emphasis mine). Additionally, Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica to inform them of certain prophetic events. One of these will be the apostasy of the churches. This apostasy will precede the first resurrection, which will precede the revelation of the antichrist, which will precede the second coming of our Lord: *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [apostasy] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition* (II Thessalonians 2:1-3, emphasis mine).

Since John was a good student of the Old Testament Scriptures, he was fully aware of the history of the Jews and of the pitfalls that had befallen them. He knew how they had turned from God to idols. He knew that the major judgments that had come upon them were because of their idolatry. John had also witnessed the apostasy of Jewry during the public ministry of our Lord.

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

He had seen the rejection of the Christ by the Jewish leaders despite the wisdom with which our Lord had spoken to them and despite the miracles that He had performed in their midst. These things should have convinced the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the Christ, but they did not. They were more concerned with their positions within the nation of Israel (John 11:48) than they were with the Person and the work of our Lord. Therefore John knew that the Palestinian covenant between God and the nation of Israel had been openly violated. The judgments called for in that covenant were about to be unleashed upon the Jews. This prompted John (being led of the Spirit) to write of the last days. Remember, John had already written: *The darkness is passing, and the true light is already shining*. Both of these references seem to be to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Thus Israel was fast fading as the light of the world, and the New Testament church was rising to be the custodian of the truth during the ages between the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord and the main harvest of the first resurrection.

This means that after the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., the truth could only be found in the New Testament church. There was no temple or sacrificial system left in Judaism to portray the truth of the gospel in shadows and types. These were no longer needed because they had all been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the old covenant was abrogated and replaced with the new covenant, but the unbelieving Jews did not recognize this. In fact modern Jewry has stated that the sacrificial system was replaced with prayer, because without the temple there was no proper place where the Jews could offer sacrifices for sin (The New Jewish Encyclopedia, Behrman House, 1962, 1976, pg. 422). This means that since the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews have been without the truth of the gospel, except in churches that have continued to preach the gospel according to the

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

command of our Lord.

Since all of the first converts to Jesus Christ were Jews, the early church faced some problems as long as the temple was still standing. These problems were unique to the Jews who professed faith in Christ. The writer to the Hebrews dealt with these problems so that the converts among the Jews would understand that the law was abrogated and the new covenant was firmly in place. Even so, before the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord, there were Jews who knew that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, but they would not commit themselves wholly to Him: *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever [maketh the sin his own] is the servant of [the] sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever* (John 8:31-35, insertion mine, based upon the meaning of *poieo*).

These Jews were servants of *the sin*, which was Adam's sin. The knowledge of good and evil obtained from Adam's sin convinced them that their knowledge of good and evil could provide them with life. Thus they were as deceived as Eve was deceived. Paul described them as *being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, [because they would not submit] themselves unto the righteousness of God* (Romans 10:3). And our Lord said: *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 [the] lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the*

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

truth, ye believe me not (John 8:44-45). This enables us to see the mind set of those who are steeped in *the sin* and reject the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

You would think that these kinds of individuals would have been content to remain in Judaism in its apostate condition, but the devil does not work that way. He works by infiltration, like the wolves in sheep's clothing. He twists and perverts the Scriptures, while insisting that his perversion (the fruit of the evil tree) will make individuals like God. Therefore believers must remember that the unadulterated Word of God properly applied will defeat the devil every time.

As we have seen, John informed the church that they had *an unction*. This was a reference to the indwelling Spirit of God. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul informed believers that it is by the indwelling Holy Spirit that the people of God are able to understand the Word of God. He also informed believers: *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Corinthians 2:14). This provides us with a mystery. The church has been commanded to go into all of the world and preach the gospel, but the world cannot understand the message that we preach unless the Spirit of God quickens the Word of God to those individuals who hear it. Then, from the perspective of the individual who hears the gospel, he believes the message and is saved. This is the miracle of the new birth. We have seen this principle at work in the original creation of man. God fashioned a body of earth and breathed into it, and it became a living soul. Thus Adam was given life by God's breath. Since it is impossible to speak without breath, there is a comparison between the original creation of Adam and the recreation of one who is saved. In both cases it was/is accomplished by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. This also gives us the key

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

to understanding how Christ was virgin born. The Scripture says that Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Christ, Who was to come into this world to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world, was breathed into the womb of Mary by God's Word and by God's Spirit: *The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven* (I Corinthians 15:47).

We know that everything that has life has its seed of reproduction within itself. Thus everything reproduces after its own kind. Like produces like. Therefore, when God produced His first son (Adam) He did it by His Word and His Spirit. So when God became a man in the Person of Jesus Christ, He did it the same way. The only difference was the body before Him. In the first place, without a man or a woman, God breathed life into a body prepared from the dust of the earth. In the second place (without a man) God breathed life into a prepared body in the womb of a virgin. Thus the virgin was merely the vehicle through which God could become a Man to ransom the human family from sin. Mary said unto the angel: *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy [Spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God* (Luke 1:34-35, emphasis mine).

This brings us to the births of the children of God. This, too, is a virgin birth of a sort. This virgin is the church. Through her evangelistic efforts of preaching the gospel to the lost of this world, the Spirit of God quickens the Word of God to their hearts and minds and regenerates their spirits (which died when Adam sinned). In this birth there is no physical coupling. There are no human works. There are no rites or rituals. These individuals merely listen to a message that is impossible for them to understand (I Corinthians 2:14) until the Spirit of God quickens them

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

and makes them spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:4-7). Thus our Lord said: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man* (John 5:25-27, emphasis mine).

This verse not only confirms that the spiritually dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and live, it also supplies the source as *the Father [who has] life in himself*. Since the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are One God, the life that the Father has is the life that the Son has. Thus the Lord has conveyed that same power of life to the church through the preaching of the gospel: *All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen* (Matthew 28:18-20).

Therefore, when the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live, at that moment they receive the forgiveness of their sins and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to confirm that God will fulfill all of His promises to them. This is the *unction* John spoke of, and this is the unction which enables the believer to know all things as he grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord: *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of [the] truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you* (John 14:16-17).

Non-Fellowship: The Antichrist System

As John came to the close of this portion of his argument, he wrote: *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. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also* (I John 2:21-23). Here John acknowledged that the majority of the people to whom he wrote understood and knew the truth. Even so, he wished them to know the subtleties of the false prophets that they might contact or that might be in their midst. So he emphasized that *no lie is of the truth*.

The importance of John's emphasis cannot be overstated, because then as now we have people who come into our midst that seem to agree with much of the doctrine of the Word of God. All genuine believers will agree with the truth of the Word of God when it is explained to them, but there are those who subtly deny some aspect of the Person or the work of Christ. Thus John reminded his audience as well as us: *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*. Our adversary the devil is a very cunning individual. Rarely does he attempt a frontal attack on the Person and work of Christ. Rather he chooses to operate in half-truths and innuendo. Never forget this!

Chapter X

STEADFAST IN THE TRUTH OF THE FELLOWSHIP

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. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 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. 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. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him (I John 2:24-29).

As we continue through First John, we must remember that John wrote to quite a cross-section of believers. He wrote to spiritual babes, spiritual young men, spiritual fathers, and he made reference to those who denied their sin nature and were not Christians at all. John was directed by the Holy Spirit to write to this body of believers in defense of the truth, and his three epistles are the product of that defense. John knew that the slightest deviation from the truth would corrupt the truth, because *no lie is of the truth* (I John 2:21). Therefore, to minimize the counterfeit believers' subtle attacks upon the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, John instructed the faithful believers in the identification of those that would seduce them.

Steadfast in the Truth of the Fellowship

If the devil has one thing working for him more than another, it is human nature. Our human nature was inherited from Adam, because he fell from the image of God when he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As suggested by its name, the fruit of that tree provided man with a sense of right and wrong, but it is corrupted by its source. Therefore all that man introspectively considers to be right or wrong is at the root of the religious and ethical systems of mankind. Since *there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not*, these systems all operate on the basis of accusing others and excusing themselves. Even so, John wrote: *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them* (I John 4:5).

When a man comes to faith in Christ, his relationship with this nature received from Adam is modified by the Word of God and the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, but it will not be removed until the day of the resurrection (I John 3:2). So the new believer must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18) to be apprised of his judicial relationship with the Lord (Colossians 3:3-4). If each one of us who are believers in Jesus Christ would remember how we came to faith in Christ; and if we would remain in the simplicity of our faith, recognizing that our salvation was a gift of God's grace from before the foundation of the world, there is little or nothing that could undermine our understanding of our relationship with God. The danger arises when the believer is seduced away from the clear teaching of the Word of God to human reasoning. This is the flesh warring against the Spirit, so Paul wrote: *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things*

Steadfast in the Truth of the Fellowship

that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law (Galatians 5:16-18, emphasis mine).

Each believer in Jesus Christ, as we have seen, was born into the family of God by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God. It was at that moment in time that each one who is now a believer saw himself as a sinner and in need of the Savior; it was at that moment that he put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ by the enabling power of the Spirit of God, Who made him a new creation in Christ Jesus; it was at that moment that his mind was changed (Biblical repentance) to think according to the Word of God and not according to the reasoning of man; even so, at that moment in time, the new believer in Jesus Christ was not able to give a theological evaluation of what had transpired when he believed on the Lord. He was like the blind man who was given his sight by our Lord -- all the new believer was able to say was, *Once I was blind, but now I can see*. On another occasion our Lord healed another blind man (Mark 8:22-25), and his immediate response was, *I see men like trees, walking*. This was not a fault in our Lord's healing power, but was done to teach the Biblical truth that clarity of spiritual sight requires each believer to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.

Consequently clarity of sight requires the sound teaching ministry of a local church (which equates with the second anointing of the blind man's eyes in the text in Mark), where each member exercises his spiritual gifts for the edification of the whole body. Whether the new believer has the opportunity to grow as he should will depend upon the extent of sound teaching that he is able to receive. Even so, from the beginning of his relationship with the Lord, God's Spirit bears witness with the believer's spirit that he is a child of God. The more we understand our

Steadfast in the Truth of the Fellowship

relationship with the Lord, the more we realize how little we had to do with our own salvation and the more thankful we are for God's grace.

Despite the clear teaching of the Word of God, the devil attacks the security of the believer with the human perspective of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Consequently the majority of the denominations under the canopy of Christianity make the believer's security dependent upon his conduct, which is a denial of the promise given by our Lord (John 10:27-30). Do not misunderstand, good conduct is always better than bad conduct, but conduct is not a part of the believer's acceptance with God. The Scripture says: *The just shall live by faith[,] And the law is not of faith* It also says: *But without faith it is impossible to please [God]: 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). Thus the believer stands in a judicial position of being justified by God's grace apart from the deeds of the law. Christ's righteousness has been judicially ascribed to the believer, just as the sins of the world were judicially ascribed to Christ (II Corinthians 5:21). Consequently Paul wrote: *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory* (Colossians 3:3-4).

Therefore John wrote: *Let that therefore abide in you which ye had from the beginning.* The message they heard as well as the message we heard was a message of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, apart from the deeds of the law. Thus the message we heard from the beginning is that God became a man through the virgin birth to stand in the sinner's stead in life and in death. Thus He stood in the sinner's stead in life to fulfill every jot and tittle of the law, and He stood in the sinner's stead in death to bear the judgment of the sins of the world. He paid the ransom

Steadfast in the Truth of the Fellowship

for sin by His death, because *without the shedding of blood there is no remission*. So the message we heard from the beginning tells us that salvation is the free gift of God; and the message we heard from the beginning eliminates the possibility of human involvement to gain or to maintain salvation. Consequently the apostle Paul wrote: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherein Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with a yoke of bondage* (Galatians 5:1).

These are some of the fundamentals of the faith in which we are to abide. The word translated *abide* in the Greek text is *meno*. It means to dwell, to remain, to stay, to abide, to continue, etc. When *meno* is used with reference to a young woman, it can mean that she is to remain as she was. Hence it is a reference to her virginity -- that she is to remain a virgin. This connotation provides understanding when we read Paul's instructions to the Corinthians: *Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present . . . a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well [resist] him* (II Corinthians 11:1-4, emphasis mine). The virgin in our text is the church, and the chastity of the church is dependent upon remaining true to the fundamental truths of the gospel, without corruption from the beguiling influence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This is the reason Paul warned the Corinthians: *But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve with his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that*

Steadfast in the Truth of the Fellowship

is in Christ. Spiritual chastity (according to John) is *abiding in that which you have heard from the beginning.* Thus John's use of the word *meno* emphasizes the need for the church to retain and maintain its spiritual virginity by walking in the truth. This leaves no room for the corrupting influence of the devil's lie, which promised Eve she could be like God with an ill-gained morality.

We have seen that no lie is of the truth. We have seen that the slightest deviation from the truth corrupts the truth. In the ranks of professing Christendom there are all kinds of errors that have come from the lie of the devil. Some are overt and obvious and others are very subtle. On the side of the overt errors we see things like the denial of the deity of Christ; the denial of the trinity; the denial of the necessity of a blood atonement; the denial of the virgin birth; the denial of the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; the denial of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures and many, many other denials. On the side of the subtle errors there are three that are most common. Actually the first two lead directly to the third. The first two errors were prevalent in the Galatian heresy. The Judaizers claimed that ritual and law works were necessary for salvation. Over time the ritual has changed from circumcision to baptism, but the error remains the same. The third error is the denial of the eternal security of the believer -- making it dependent upon the conduct of the believer.

These errors, or variations of the same, are common to most of the denominations under the canopy of Christianity. Consequently most of them believe in the baptismal regeneration of infants. When these infants reach puberty, they are catechized, examined and confirmed. They are then responsible to keep the laws of the church and the law of Moses in order to maintain their salvation. If at any time they fail to keep these laws, any number of things can happen to them,

Steadfast in the Truth of the Fellowship

but in most cases they are required to confess their sins and have a sacrifice made for their sins. In the Roman Church, for example, they must confess their sins to the priest. He will require various things from them for absolution. Additionally, they must then go to mass, where through the doctrine of transubstantiation Christ is sacrificed for their sins. This is a direct violation of the truth that Christ made *one sacrifice for sins forever*.

After encouraging the church to abide in the truth they had heard from the beginning, John made a very positive statement: *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life*. This eternal status is not maintained by believers; it is maintained by the Lord: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God [being guarded] through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time* (I Peter 1:3-5, emphasis mine). Thus it is our responsibility as the fellowship of Christ to stand firm in the truth of the gospel. We are not to be moved away from the confession of the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is absolutely necessary, because doctrinal purity is the virginity in which the church is to abide.

As we continue in First John, we come to another mistranslation of the verb *write*. As we noted before, *I wrote* in the Greek text was translated as *I have written* in our English Bible. In addition to this, the word *seduce* was translated in the present tense rather than as a present participle in the Greek text. Thus, adding these corrections and others, John actually wrote: *These things [I wrote] unto you concerning them that [are seducing] you. But the anointing which [ye*

Steadfast in the Truth of the Fellowship

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. And now, little children, abide in him; that, [if he were manifested] we may have confidence, and not be ashamed [in the presence of him]. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that [maketh his righteousness his own] has been born of him (Free translation of I John 2:26-29).

The past tense verb *wrote* returns us to the other two letters John wrote to this church. As we have previously seen, Second and Third John were written before First John. Thus it was in those letters that John first mentioned those that were seducing them:

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (II John 1:7-11).

And again, in Third John:

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is [the] evil, but that which is [the] good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. (III John 1:9-11)

Thus it becomes evident, as we have already seen, the antecedent for the past-tense verb *wrote in our text* is the letter we call Second John. In that letter John warned the brethren of those who might come to them without a proper confession of Jesus Christ, claiming to be their brethren. He warned that if they did not agree with God about the Person and the work of Christ,

Steadfast in the Truth of the Fellowship

they were antichrist. Therefore John told the true brethren how important it was for them to abide in the truth which they had heard from the beginning. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Demetrius and Second John were not received, but were repelled by Diotrephes. This resulted in the writing of Third John, where Diotrephes is revealed in all of his self-righteous hypocrisy as a promoter of the evil and not the good. Thus the infiltration and control of men like Diotrephes was a perfect example of those that were abusing them.

Chapter XI

THE HOPE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

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. 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 (I John 3:1-3).

In this text the words translated *the sons of God* would be better translated *the children of God*, because this is the literal meaning of the Greek text. Whether we use the terms *the sons of God* or *the children of God*, it may be difficult for some of us to grasp the full extent of this description; or, perhaps because we still manifest our sin natures (I John 1:8), we are not comfortable pressing this description to its logical conclusion. Nevertheless, in salvation (through the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ), we believers are declared to have died with Christ, to have been buried with Christ and to have been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life, which is a walk of faith. This was effected by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:3-4) at the moment of salvation. We are also declared to be holy, righteous and just, but these are imputed attributes and are not the believer's by right of performance.

The Hope of the Fellowship

This is best illustrated by the believer's judicial relationship with Christ. The Scriptures teach us that many of the attributes of Christ were/are imputed to the believer at the moment of salvation just as the sins of the world were imputed to Christ, so that He bore the judgment of those sins on the cross of Calvary. Consequently the apostle Paul wrote: *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* (II Corinthians 5:21). Thus our standing before God is a judicial standing and will not be an actual standing until we shall see the fulfillment of John's statement, *when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*.

The corrupt Mormon doctrine of *Adam god* may also be a key factor in the reticence of many believers to ponder the implication associated with being called *the children of God*. "Their *Doctrines and Covenants* (Sec. 130:22) declares: *The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as any man's; and this being, says Joseph Smith, cannot occupy two distinct places at once*. But who is this huge man in the heavens? The answer is almost past belief: but it comes from no less than their supreme prophet, Brigham Young: *Adam is God, the Supreme God, the Creator of this world, our God, and the only God with whom we have to do. He is our Father and our God. Who is the Father? The First of the human family. Adam, says the Pearl of Great Price* (p. 60), *is the Father of All, the Prince of All, and the Ancient of Days*." (*Heresies Exposed*, William C. Irvine, Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., Bible Truth Depot, New York, NY, First Edition 1917, Twenty-fourth Edition 1950, pg.134)

Despite the claims of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, the Mormon heresy is easily refuted by the Scriptures. Our Lord said to the woman at the well, *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth* (John 4:24). Spirit is incorporeal. The

The Hope of the Fellowship

Scriptures teach that God created Adam (1:26-27; Genesis 2:21-25), and if Adam was created by God, he cannot be God. Further, Psalm 139 declares God to be Omniscient and Omnipresent. These attributes of God prove Joseph Smith and Brigham Young to be absolutely wrong about God's capabilities, unless, of course, you wish to give the nineteenth century founders of a cult greater authority than the verbally inspired Word of God (II Timothy 3:16-17). It is self-evident, as a potter has power over the clay (Romans 9:21), the Creator of this universe must have the capability of superintending His creation (Psalm 33:6-9; Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 40:22-31).

Consequently the distinction between John's statement in our text and the Mormon heresy is easily seen by anyone with spiritual discernment. In addition to our text, the Scriptures also teach that those who receive the truth of the Word of God shall one day be called gods (compare John 10:34-36 with Psalm 82:6). However one thing must be made clear -- the present condition of those of us who are the children of God does not reflect what we shall be when we are resurrected, glorified and adopted into the family of God. It is then that we shall be like Him and not before.

We have previously described how we believers have been born into the family of God by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God. We have seen that despite this birth, we have retained the sin nature we received from Adam. Thus the Biblical doctrines of regeneration, resurrection, adoption and glorification are designed to remove the curse of sin, death and the Adamic nature which are ours because of the fall of Adam. This means that our spiritual adoption will be somewhat like a natural adoption (prior to the convoluted judgments that have come from modern courts), because in natural adoption the birth parents lose all legal

The Hope of the Fellowship

claims upon the child that is given up for adoption. These claims are transferred to the adoptive parents by the adoption procedure. So, as our text tells us, *when we see him, we shall be like him*. This means that spiritual life is restored by regeneration through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, and physical life (without sin and a sin nature) will be restored by the believer's resurrection, glorification and adoption back into the image of God.

In the New Testament Scriptures salvation is spoken of as *regeneration*, and the reception of the Holy Spirit is spoken of as *the renewing of the Holy Spirit*. These terms take us back once again to the book of Genesis and the creation of Adam. The Scriptures declare that Adam was created in the image of God. Thus he was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, because he was in the image of God. Adam's posterity were/are all born spiritually dead because of the judgment of Adam's sin. Nevertheless, because Adam was once indwelt by the Holy Spirit, those in his race who are redeemed are counted to have the renewing of the Holy Spirit even though, until the time of their salvation, they were never indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

In the genealogy in the third chapter of Luke, Adam is said to be the son of God, but it is in Christ, not Adam, that we shall be called the sons of God. Consequently, in the garden of Eden, Adam was warned not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil under the penalty of spiritual and physical death: *for the day that thou eatest thereof [dying thou shalt die]*. In the Hebrew text, *dying* referred to the process of physical death and *thou shalt die* referred to his instantaneous spiritual death. Consequently, at the moment of eating, Adam died spiritually (and fell from the image of God), and then he began to die physically.

In our Lord's discourse on the Good Shepherd, He told the Jews: *My sheep hear my voice,*

The Hope of the Fellowship

*and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? (John 10:27-36, emphasis mine) Since *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*, and since our Lord is God, John's statement: *when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is* and our Lord's reference to Psalm 82:6 are in perfect agreement.*

It is interesting to note that in our text John used some interesting grammar. The word *behold* is an aorist verb in the imperative mood. The aorist tense is a punctiliar act in time past. Since it is not possible to command someone in the present to do something in the past, this construction was used by the Greeks to make a comparison between the past and the present or the past and the future. Thus John admonished the believers in this church to look at the love God had bestowed in time past and compare it with the love He will bestow at the resurrection, glorification and adoption of the believer back into the image of God.

God's love to Adam and Eve was manifested immediately after they sinned, when God

The Hope of the Fellowship

called all of the parties involved in the fall of Adam and Eve into judgment. Thus, when God judged the serpent, His love, mercy and grace were manifested to Adam and Eve, because God promised that *the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent would bruise his heel*. Adam believed this promise. This can be seen by the fact that he called his wife's name *Eve*, which means *life giver* or *the mother of all living*. It was then that God sacrificed an innocent victim (probably a lamb) in the stead of Adam and Eve and clothed them with its skin. The sacrifice was a portrayal of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the clothing of skin was a type of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to the believer at the moment of salvation; but it must also be noted that their attempt to clothe themselves was totally unacceptable to God and represents the works of the flesh.

God's love to Adam and Eve was further manifested by their expulsion from the garden. On the surface this may not appear to be a manifestation of love, but it was because *the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life* (Genesis 3:22-24, emphasis mine). Thus their expulsion prevented them from eating of the tree of life. If they had done this, they would have lived forever in bodies that are subject to sin, sickness and aging, with no hope of release from those bodies.

Therefore God drove them from the garden to eventually face the death of their physical

The Hope of the Fellowship

bodies (Genesis 5:5). God also promised the seed of the woman to give them hope in death, because His promised judgment of the serpent foresaw our Lord's promise to His disciples in the gospel: *[B]ecause I live, ye shall live also*. Thus, for the redeemed, death releases our souls and spirits from our corruptible bodies to reside in bodies which our Lord went to prepare (John 14:1-3) -- bodies in which to dwell until the day of the first resurrection (II Corinthians 5:1-5). Then our corruptible bodies will be raised in incorruption, so that when we see Him, we shall be like Him. Thus the point of the comparison is that Adam and all of his race, who have their faith in the redemptive work of Christ, will have (at the first resurrection) made a journey from Eden to Eden -- from the Paradise of God to the Paradise of God -- from the image of God back into the image of God:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 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. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:1-10, emphasis mine)

There might be an occasion in the realm of human love when a man would dare to risk his life for a good man. However for a man to give his life for his enemies is unheard of, but this is exactly what our Lord did. He died for us when we were His enemies, ungodly and sinners: *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons*

The Hope of the Fellowship

of God.

As we have previously seen in our text, the word *behold* is a past/present tense comparative. This means that the love of God is consistent and it is continuous. It is eternal, because God is eternal. The Scriptures declare that *God is love*. Therefore God's love cannot be compared to anything in man's experience, except man's redemption -- because God's love transcends everything that man calls love. Thus God's love is without selfishness; it is without partiality; it is full of grace and mercy, and it is exercised within the realm of God's Holiness, Righteousness and Justice.

Even though man was created in the image of God, with the fall of man there was a dramatic change in man. In the image of God, he was to operate on the basis of the commands and teaching of God. However, with the fall of man, man took an image that was shaped by a self-determined knowledge of good and evil. Thus man became selfish, egocentric, self-indulgent and corrupted by a sense of good and evil that is without absolutes. Hence man is full of self-love, and this self-love sometimes manifests itself in ways that are even beyond human comprehension.

Nevertheless, by the Love of God and through the preaching of the Word of God, the Spirit of God finally arrested our souls and enabled us to see that we are sinners and undone. Then he changed our minds (this is Biblical repentance), so that we recognized that we could not possibly make ourselves fit for the presence of God by the works of our own hands. It was then that He enabled us to believe the gospel -- how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. This was totally an act of God's grace, because *There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*

The Hope of the Fellowship

(Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Throughout this book, we have emphasized the grace of God -- that believers are not under the law; that our human conduct cannot improve our status with God; that our status was purchased for us with the blood of Jesus Christ -- but we have never encouraged improper behavior in anyone. If the grace, love and mercy of God does not affect our behavior, no amount of law can change our behavior. Law is diagnostic. It reveals improper behavior, but it has no power to implement good behavior. It can only punish improper behavior. Thus John wrote: *And every man [having this hope] in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (I John 3:3). In this text, the root word translated *pure* and *purifieth* is the same word that is translated *chaste* in II Corinthians chapter eleven. Thus the doctrinal purity of understanding that salvation is by God's grace, apart from the deeds of the law, effects and promotes a proper walk before the Lord -- a *Walk in the Truth*.

Chapter XII

THE SIN IS THE INIQUITY

Whosoever committeth [the] sin transgresseth also the law: for [the] sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth [the] 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. 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. 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 (I John 3:4-10, added definite articles are in the Greek text).

At first glance, the title to this chapter does not seem to fit the verses under discussion. The reason for this is that it seems that the translator mixed a translation of the text with his interpretation of the text, because the phrases *transgresseth also the law* and *transgression of the law* are not in the Greek text. This, in itself, is not a breach of good translation practices, because it is sometimes necessary to interpret idioms and other special uses of speech. Even so, the translator also used the secondary meaning of the Greek word *poieo*, *to do*, rather than the primary meaning, *to make* (which usage seems to better fit the context), and he failed to translate three definite articles in the text (used with the noun *sin*) that are important to a proper understanding

The Sin is the Iniquity

of the text. Further it appears that the translator departed from the theme of John's epistle, because he assumed that John wrote about acts of sin rather than identifying the specific sin that was being practiced by the counterfeit believers and false prophets who came in contact with the church to whom John wrote.

Thus, considering the structure of the text, a free translation of the first part of it could read: *Whosoever makes the sin [his], also makes the lawlessness [his], for the sin is the lawlessness.* *Poieo* (the Greek word translated *doeth* in our text) can be used in a variety of ways, one of which is in the sense of bringing something to pass. It can also be used in the sense of making something one's own -- like taking a wife or adopting a child (*An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, Liddel and Scott, Seventh Edition, Oxford, 1889, 1961, pg. 651). This gives us some keys to understanding this verse. Further, the use of the definite article before *sin* and *lawlessness* makes our text a reference to a specific sin and not to sin in general. Thus, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we know that *the sin* is a reference to Adam's sin, which was a singular transgression of a singular command -- not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Nevertheless, the verb (*poieon*) in our text is in the present tense. Since Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden and cherubims were placed to guard it, subsequent generations have not had access to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This means that we cannot commit the specific sin of Adam in the present tense (even though Adam's sin is charged to his posterity by federal headship). Therefore the present tense verb seems to demand that *the sin* be a reference to that which was obtained from *the sin* of Adam -- a knowledge of good and evil, which, according to the serpent's lie, was supposed to make those who ate of it like God.

The Sin is the Iniquity

Thus, in the Greek text, John wrote: *The sin is the iniquity [the lawlessness]*. Since this is true, *the iniquity*, which is the product of Adam's sin (a knowledge of good and evil, to make one like God), can be made a source of life in the present tense.

We must not forget that God had said to Adam: *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof [dying thou shalt die]* (Genesis 2:16-17). So Adam's disobedience produced immediate spiritual death, and it ultimately produced his physical death. Even though Eve is not a federal head, her deception by the serpent's lie precipitated Adam's sin, and Adam is our federal head as well as Eve's (because she was taken from Adam's side). Thus *the sin* (of Adam) produced the concept in the human family that a man can have a right relationship with God by his knowledge of good and evil (obtained by disobedience to God). This is the singular sin and lawlessness of our text. Paul made this clear in his letter to the Romans when he wrote: *For the wages of [the] sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans 6:23).

The untranslated definite article before *sin* in Paul's statement to the Romans identifies *the sin* (Adam's) that produced death. Thus this verse (that is often quoted to show the consequences of personal sin) is not directly related to personal sin. It refers to the consequences of Adam's sin. This was spiritual and physical death, and it is/was meted to the entire human family because of the federal headship of Adam. Furthermore, apart from salvation in Jesus Christ, all of Adam's race have been deceived into believing that they can be accepted of God on the basis of their understanding of right and wrong (the fruit of the evil tree), which by definition is human

The Sin is the Iniquity

morality. Therefore this means that whoever looks for a source of life in the sin of Adam has been deceived by the serpent's lie, the same as Eve was deceived, and this was the specific sin of the counterfeit Christians in the church to whom John wrote.

The sin of Adam has produced three things in his race: *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*. These are the things the woman saw in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that enticed her to eat of it. (Compare Genesis 3:6 with I John 2:15-16.) This means that the overt sins that man commits have come from the first two lusts, and all that man counts to be good has come from the pride of life. Therefore this means that all of the religions and social mores of this world (other than Biblical Christianity and Biblical Judaism) have come from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Thus when men reject the grace of God in Jesus Christ for their own righteousness, they have made their knowledge of good and evil, obtained by the sin of Adam, a source of life. This is the reason that John has told us that *the sin is the iniquity [the lawlessness]*, because the theme of his three epistles is *Walking in the Truth*; and the primary factor that corrupts and prevents a walk in the truth is *the sin -- a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12).

Furthermore when our Lord referred to false prophets in His sermon on the mount, He said: *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 [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from*

The Sin is the Iniquity

me, ye that work [the] iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23, emphasis mine). Thus there is a direct connection between John's statement, *the sin is the iniquity*, and our Lord's statement about false prophets. This means that John's reference to *the iniquity* and our Lord's reference to *the iniquity* are both references to the fruit of the evil tree, *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12).

As we continue with our text, John also wrote: *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin* (I John 3:5). If we contrast this verse with the previous verse, we have a comparison between that which Adam provided the human family and that which the Lord Jesus Christ has provided. Thus, on the one hand, Adam, as the federal head of the human family, has provided the human family with the consequences of his sin, which is spiritual and physical death and a sin nature, which produces personal sin, and the concept that man can be like God with his knowledge of good and evil; on the other hand, the Lord Jesus Christ, acting as the Federal Head of those that believe, has provided the solution to both of these forms of death through His sacrifice for sin, and He has also provided the believer with His Holy Spirit, to bear witness with the believer's spirit that he belongs to the Lord (Romans 8:16), even in the face of personal faults.

John declared that Christ was manifested to take away our sins. He did this through His High Priestly ministry in our behalf: *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man [Jesus Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever*

The Sin is the Iniquity

them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy [Spirit] also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 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. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin (Hebrews 10:11-18, emphasis mine). Thus the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ has provided eternal redemption for those that believe.

Christ, indeed, was manifested to take away our sins, but our present text states: *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him neither known him.* Does this mean that believers in Jesus Christ are sinless? This is not possible, because John wrote in the first chapter of this epistle: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (I John 1:8). On the surface, then, it appears that we have a contradiction, but since *God cannot lie*, the fault must lie with the translation and not with the inspired Word of God. The solution to this apparent contradiction lies in two things: the untranslated definite articles before the noun, *sin*, and the translator's apparent disregard for the immediate and over-all context of the Scriptures.

John wrote about the sin nature of the believer in chapter one of his epistle and the sins that it produces. However, in our present text in chapter three, John used the verb form of sin rather than the noun, so we have to look to the context to see specifically what sin he that abideth in Him is incapable of committing. This is found in I John 3:4 in the Greek text, where John wrote, *the sin is the iniquity.* Thus our present text is a continuation of the subject of *the sin*. Since *the sin* takes us back to Adam's sin, we must consider again the statement of the serpent to Eve: *Ye shall*

The Sin is the Iniquity

not surely die: For God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:4-5). From this we learn that the lie of the serpent is the lie of the false prophet. Thus, according to the lie, an individual's understanding of right and wrong (his morality) can give him life with God. We must recognize, then, that once an individual has trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior (by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God), he cannot look to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (his morality) as a source of life, for Jesus Christ is *the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by [him]* (John 14:6).

Thus the morality obtained from the evil tree cannot produce life. The apostle Paul made this very plain in the Greek text of his epistle to the Romans, because Paul used the definite article before the noun sin (in the singular) thirty times from Romans 5:12 to Romans 8:3. Nevertheless, in our English translation of Romans, the translator did not translate even one of them. Some might try to justify the translator by saying that this was a writing style of the apostle Paul, or that it is a structural necessity in the Greek language. This, however, is negated by the fact that in Paul's twelve other epistles, he only used this construction three times. Further, all of the other New Testament writers used this construction a total of fifteen times, and, of these, the apostle John used it nine times, and the writer to the Hebrews used it four times. Therefore the context in which this construction is found, and the number of times that the apostle Paul used it in his epistle to the Romans, demands that *the sin* be a specific sin. Later in our studies we will see that *the sin*, in a specific set of circumstances, is related to the unpardonable sin.

It only takes two verses in the sixth chapter of the book of Romans to illustrate the

The Sin is the Iniquity

importance of this construction. These verses show us that the apostle Paul wrote about a specific sin in Romans chapter five to chapter eight and not about sin in general: *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of [the] sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from [the] sin, ye became the servants of [the] righteousness* (Roman 6:17-18). This verse reveals that the believer has been freed from the lie of the serpent (trying to establish one's own righteousness before God by works of righteousness) to being a servant of the righteousness of Christ, which was obtained by grace through faith in the truth of the gospel.

Continuing with our text from the third chapter of First John, John wrote: *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous* (I John 3:7, emphasis mine). Considering what we know from the Scriptures, is this true? No! It is a direct contradiction of Paul's statement to Titus: *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 [Spirit]* (Titus 3:5, emphasis mine).

Since *God cannot lie*, and since: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God*, there must be a solution to this problem, but it is not found in our English Bible. The solution is found in the meaning of the Greek word *poieo*, which we have previously considered. In addition to Paul's statement to Titus, he also wrote the Corinthians: *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* (II Corinthians 5:21). If we put these truths together, along with the primary meaning of the Greek word *poieo*, *to make*, and we apply this information to our text, it could read: *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that*

The Sin is the Iniquity

maketh [Christ's] righteousness [his own] is righteous, even as he is righteous (I John 3:7, freely translated). Thus, applying the truths we have learned, the contradiction is gone. Further, the insertion of *Christ* (in brackets) in our free translation is not necessary as long as we understand that it is Christ's righteousness (imputed to us) that makes us righteous.

We come now to another difficult portion of our English translation of First John: *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* (I John 3:8). Close attention to the immediate and over-all context of this verse is necessary for a proper understanding of it. First, the concept of sinlessness in believers must be discarded, because John has already written: *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (I John 1:8). Second, the translator did not translate the definite article before sin in this text. If he had translated it, it would be easier to understand that a specific sin is the subject of this verse. Therefore we know from our earlier studies that *the sin* produced the counterfeit gospel of the devil. This means that he who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and turns to the lie of the devil as a source of life, this individual is of the devil. He has accepted the lie in lieu of the truth and has thus committed the unpardonable sin. (Note: We will expand our study of the unpardonable sin when we deal with Cain later in this chapter of First John.) Third, the devil introduced sin into the universe when (as the anointed cherub) he was lifted up in pride because of his great beauty (Ezekiel 28:14-17). Fourth, it was the devil (through the serpent) who introduced *the sin* into the world through the things that Eve saw in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Compare Genesis 3:6 with I John 2:15-16.) Thus, according to the continuing subject of *the sin*, our text could read:

The Sin is the Iniquity

Whosoever makes the sin his [in the sense of making it a source of life] *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* (I John 3:8, freely translated). Since the latter part of our verse is the solution to Adam's sin (*the sin*), which gave the world spiritual death, physical death, a sin nature and its consequent many sins, verse eight indirectly contrasts the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the fruit of the tree of life (the cross of Calvary upon which Jesus Christ was sacrificed for our sins). Thus it was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary that will ultimately destroy the work of the devil, embodied in *the sin*. This sin will continue to be manifested until the time of the great white throne judgment, following the loosing of Satan and the deception of the nations towards the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:7-15).

This brings us then to the last two verses of our text: *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. 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* (I John 3:9-10). These two verses must be considered in the light of the over-all context of *the sin* in this chapter, even though the definite article is not used before sin in the ninth verse. John has already shown us in chapter one that believers are not sinless. Therefore the first statement in our text, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin* cannot be true of sin in general, but it is true of *the sin* of looking to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a source of life. Once an individual has looked to Jesus Christ as the only source of life, he has been born of God and has eternal life.

In our Lord's public ministry, He spoke the parable of the sower, the parable of the tares

The Sin is the Iniquity

and the wheat, the parable of a grain of mustard seed and the parable of a woman who hid leaven in three measures of meal:

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do [the] iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:36-43, emphasis mine)

From our Lord's interpretation of the parable, we know that the good seed is the gospel, which produces children of the kingdom. Since the enemy that sowed the tares was the devil, we know that the seed that produced the tares was the lie of the serpent, which is *another gospel*. Further, we know that both types of seed were sown in the field, which represents the world of unsaved men. This means that there are three classes of people in the world: children of God, children of the devil and the field of unsaved men and women.

On the surface it appears that there is no difference between the unsaved world and the children of the wicked one, but there is. Even though both of them think according to the knowledge received as a result of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tares have overtly rejected the truth of the gospel for the fruit of the evil tree: *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). This has sealed their eternal damnation; hence they are children of the wicked one.

Therefore, in the light of what we have learned: *Whosoever is born of God does not make*

The Sin is the Iniquity

that which was obtained from the sin of Adam a source of life: and he cannot sin in this way because he is born of God. We know that this is both translation and interpretation, but the difference with our free translation and the King James translation is that our translation (with editorial insertions) fits the immediate and the over-all context of the Scriptures. Thus, as our text states, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.* John then went on to say: *whosoever maketh not [Christ] righteousness his [in the sense of II Corinthians 5:21] is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

To understand the latter part of this verse (*neither he that loveth not his brother*), we must go to John's definition of love (agape) in the fourth chapter of First John. In that portion of his epistle, John made a distinction between children of God and the children of this world:

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. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world [the system of thought that came from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], and the world [those who are of that system of thought] heareth them. We [those who make a Biblical confession of Christ] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of [the] truth, and the spirit of [the] error.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 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. (I John 4:4-11, emphasis and editorial comments are mine)

The *Ye* of this text are those who confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This confession is in the Biblical sense of the word *homologeō*, which means to be in agreement with or to say the same thing as another. The obvious other is the Spirit of God. Thus the *Ye* are believers in Jesus Christ. By way of contrast, the *they* of this text are the conscious non-

The Sin is the Iniquity

confessors of Jesus Christ. These are they who reject the truth of the Word of God for the lie of the devil. This makes them tares, which according to our Lord's interpretation of the parable of the tares and the wheat, makes them children of the devil.

Thus John admonished the believers to whom he wrote to *love one another: for love is of God*. Then John defined what he meant by his use of the Greek word *agape* (love), when he wrote: *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. Our Lord also used *agape* in His conversation with Nicodemus, when He said: *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:13-16).

This means that the love of Christ and the love that believers are to show to one another and to a lost world is embodied in the truth of the gospel. This love is not gushy sentimentality. It is the truth that there is only one way into the presence of God -- it is through faith in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Who provided a covering (atonement) for our sins on the Mercy Seat which is in heaven. Thus the love of Christ is manifested in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This means that believers manifest this love through the great commission of our Lord to preach the gospel in all of the world. They also manifest this love to one another by their mutual appreciation for the forgiveness of their sins in Jesus Christ. Believers have been forgiven; therefore they are to be forgiving to one another (Ephesians 4:32).

The Sin is the Iniquity

In an earlier chapter, we wrote about a modern movement (especially amongst Baptists) that claims that God has preserved His Word for us in the King James Bible. Our studies thus far show the absurdity of such a claim. God has preserved His Word in the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in which they were written and from which the King James translation of the Bible came into existence. Thus without at least a working knowledge of these languages (using lexicons, grammars, interlinear translations, analytical lexicons, etc.), we are greatly hampered in dealing with texts such as we have been dealing with in this book.

The people who take the position *King James only* may think that they are defending the Scriptures by such a position, but, as this chapter alone shows, they are not! This is not to say that the King James Bible is not a wonderful Bible. It is. I love its classic style and elegance. I prefer the King James translation of the Scriptures above all other English translations. It has been my constant companion for the fifty-eight plus years since my salvation; but like any other translation of the Scriptures, it cannot always supply the answers to difficulties in the Scriptures. Thus the apostle Paul advised Timothy: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness* (II Timothy 2:15-16).

Chapter XIII

THE IMPOSSIBLE SIN FOR THE FELLOWSHIP

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 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. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. (I John 3:11-13)

The immediate and the overall context of any portion of Scripture is of extreme importance in the proper interpretation of that Scripture. Our present text is a good example of the importance of this rule of interpretation. As we recall the previous verses in this third chapter of First John and compare them with other relevant Scripture, the information gained will give us at least five reasons why Cain *was of that wicked one*, and why those like Cain hate those who have their faith in the grace of God in Jesus Christ. These comparisons (some direct, others indirect) will show us why *his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*.

First, John stressed the fact of God's love to believers in this chapter, when he wrote: *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons [children] of God*. Indeed, considering the fall of Adam from the image of God; and considering that Adam's race has been produced in *his image* (Genesis 5:3); and considering that *there is not*

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not (Ecclesiastes 7:20), it is incredulous that anyone from Adam's race could be called *a child of God*.

Nevertheless, despite our sin natures and the personal sins that have come from those natures, God in His infinite love, mercy and grace has provided a solution to man's helpless condition, which was wrought by Eve's deception by the serpent and Adam's wilful sin. This solution required that God (in the second Person of the Godhead) become a Man through the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, so that He could be related to man, yet be without the inherited sin nature of man. Thus, as the God-Man, Jesus Christ was able to do what no other human could possibly do -- He fulfilled all righteousness, and He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law. Then, as a *priest forever after the order of Melchisedec*, He offered Himself as a ransom for sin. This means that God fully satisfied His Holiness, Righteousness and Justice, as well as His Love, Mercy and Grace through the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that all who believe that *Christ died for [their] sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures*, are judicially declared to be children of God, and they are declared to have an incorruptible inheritance in heaven that fadeth not away, because they are kept by the power of God (I Peter 1:3-5). This also means that the spiritual life that died in Adam could only be recreated (for each individual who believes) by Jesus Christ (Titus 3:5). This, too, is the reason our Lord told His disciples the night before His crucifixion, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6).

Second, based upon the believer's incredulous recreation into the family of God by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, the believer has

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

been given eternal life. Nevertheless, while the believer sojourns on this earth, the spiritual life of the believer is housed in *an earthen vessel* (a body subject to sin and death). Even so, with death and the resurrection from the dead, the life that was attained by faith in the Person and the work of Christ will be both spiritual and physical, and this life will then be housed in an incorruptible body, *made like unto his glorious body*. Thus John wrote: *therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not*, and the apostle Paul supplied the primary reason for this ignorance: *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:9-14, emphasis mine).*

Third, since believers in Jesus Christ still retain their sin natures (received as a result of the fall of Adam), *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*. Further, since physical and spiritual death were two of the consequences of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was necessary that both of these forms of death (imposed by God's judgment in the garden) be

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

conquered by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Thus spiritual death is conquered in life through the preaching of the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, and physical death was conquered by Jesus Christ in His crucifixion, burial and resurrection from the dead; so that our Lord said, *Because I live, ye shall live also*. Thus, through the resurrection from the dead, the body of *[the] sin* in which individual believers have dwelt shall be made incorruptible: *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is [the] sin; and the strength of [the] sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:53-57)*. Therefore the transformation from *corruptible*, because of the sin of Adam, to *incorruptible*, through the resurrection from the dead, is only possible because *he [Christ] was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*.

Fourth, because Christ was manifested to take away our sins, the genuine believer in Jesus Christ is free from the concept that his righteousness before God is at all a product of his own human efforts, because John also wrote (in the Greek text of I John 3:4): *The sin is the iniquity*. This means that the singular sin of Adam produced the singular lawlessness of Adam, which produced the concept in Adam's posterity that a man can be like God by what he does. This was the lie of the devil. It promised life, but it produced death, both spiritual and physical. Thus, as we have already seen, salvation in Jesus Christ has provided the only solution to both of these forms of death. It should be evident, then, that neither of these forms of death could/can be

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

conquered by human effort. Therefore the believer has rejected the lie of the devil for the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, so that by the judicial reckoning of God the believer *is [counted to be] righteous, even as he is righteous.*

Fifth, he who rejects the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ for his own righteousness is of the devil, but the remainder of the unsaved world (who have not consciously rejected the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ) are simply *children of wrath* or *children of [the] disobedience*. It is interesting to note that because of their fallen natures, these people also think according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Even so, they can be distinguished from the children of the devil by the fact that they have not consciously rejected the grace of God in Jesus Christ. These people correspond to the *field* in the parable of the tares sown amongst the wheat. This means that they are neither tares nor wheat, but by whatever seed was sown and whatever fruit springs forth from the field, they can potentially spring forth as either children of the wicked one or children of God; but if they do neither they simply remain the *children of the disobedience*.

This means, that in the light of the truth of the gospel, the children of God and the children of the devil are manifested by what they deem to be the source of their righteousness. The child of God has his trust in the grace of God, through the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; whereas, the child of the devil has consciously rejected the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ for the works of his own hands. We cannot over stress the fact that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with good behavior. The danger arises when the demand for good behavior supplants the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This was the practice of the Judaizers in the churches

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

of Galatia, when they told the Gentiles that they could not be saved unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses. Similarly, during the public ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord warned certain Jews that they were in danger of committing a sin that could never be forgiven.

An examination of the twelfth chapter of Matthew (where this warning was given) reveals that the Jews (who had received our Lord's warning) had attributed the works of our Lord to the devil and the works of the devil to the Spirit of God. Our Lord called this unforgivable sin, *the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 12:22-32); and, interestingly, it bears a resemblance to the deception of Eve by the serpent (even though that sin was not unforgivable, because there was not a conscious rejection of the truth for the lie). Continuing with the verses we have already studied, then, a contextual free translation of what John wrote is: *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever [maketh not Christ righteousness his] is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother [through the truth of the gospel].*

This brings us, then, to our present text where John used the relationship between Cain and Abel to illustrate the dire consequences of not heeding all that John had previously written in this chapter: *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 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. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you (I John 3:11-13).*

The message that we heard from the beginning was the manifestation of the love of God to a lost world through the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This love was first

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

manifested to Adam and Eve immediately after their sin, when God promised the judgment of the serpent through the seed of the woman. We know that Adam believed God's promise (even though Adam did not know exactly how God would fulfill it), because he projected the promise to the only woman he knew. This, as we have seen, is the reason he called his wife *Eve*. Thus, with Adam's expression of faith, God then expanded His revelation by making a sacrifice to provide an acceptable covering for their nakedness. Thus the skin of the sacrifice represented the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ with which the believer stands justified before God. This sacrifice projected a truth that God later revealed to Moses: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement [a covering] for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement [a covering] for the soul (Leviticus 17:11).*

The love that believers manifest towards one another is expressed in the New Testament by the Greek word *agape*. This word, as defined by John, expresses the truth of the gospel: *In this was manifested the love [agape] of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love [agape], not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (I John 4:9-10).* It must be understood that we have this definition of *agape* by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore this definition takes precedent over any definition the Greeks might have used for *agape*. This means that when we find the Greek word *agape* in the New Testament, we can substitute the phrase *the love of Christ* for the English word *love* in many instances, and this will give us a greater understanding of the text. However this is not always true, because there are some instances in which *agape* merely expresses the highest form of human love, with no allusion

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

to the sacrifice of Christ. These instances are easily seen by the context.

With all that we have considered thus far, and with the account of the births and offerings of Cain and Abel in Genesis, God has given us sufficient information about them for us to know why Cain's *works were evil, and his brother's righteous*. First, since *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, we know there must have been a proclamation of the events of the garden of Eden and the promise of the seed of the woman to the children of Adam and Eve. Second, in keeping with the proclamation of the truth throughout the Scriptures, we know that it would have been Adam who related the events of his fall and subsequent salvation to his children.

(Note: by the children of Adam and Eve, we are not referring only to Cain and Abel. We know that Adam *begat sons and daughters* during the one hundred and thirty years that had elapsed between Adam's creation and the birth of Seth [Genesis 5:3-4]. The actual number of sons and daughters and sons and daughters of sons and daughter is impossible to know, but we know that Cain selected a wife of one of them [Genesis 4:17].) Third, we know that it was then possible, through Adam's preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, for some of Adam's posterity to believe the truth of the gospel (as it was related to them through the promise of the seed of the woman and the shadows and types of the sacrificial system). We also know (as in every age) that there were those who openly rejected the truth for the lie of the devil, and there were those who lived their lives without a conscious decision regarding the truth or the lie.

It is imperative, then, that we carefully consider the account of the offerings of Cain and Abel recorded in Genesis: *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that*

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

*Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, *Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.* And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him (Genesis 4:1-7, emphasis mine).*

These verses remind us that the purpose of the Bible is God's unfolding drama of redemption. Therefore, while our curiosity would like to know more about the history of the human family, the biographical sketches that we have in the Scriptures are related to the Biblical theme of redemption. Thus the account of the births of Cain and Abel establishes the fact that they were the first offsprings of the federal headship of Adam. This means that they were both born spiritually dead, just as all of Adam's posterity have been born spiritually dead. This means that any spiritual expression on their parts would have had its source in either the lie of the devil, or in the truth of the Word of God, that was related unto them by their father.

It might be assumed, because Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer, that each of them offered unto God the fruits of their labors. While this is a perfectly natural assumption, we have to ask ourselves, what possible connection could that information have to do with the theme of redemption? Since the obvious answer is, No connection, we know that their offerings were their individual responses to the preaching of Adam. Further, since this is true, their offerings show that Abel believed the Word of God and Cain did not.

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

Our text from Genesis tells us: *And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect.* The Scriptures also tell us: *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh* (Hebrews 11:4), and the Scriptures tell us: *But without 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). Since *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17), we know that Abel's offering was a response of faith, and Cain's was not. Nevertheless, in His grace, God gave Cain an opportunity to respond to his need of a Savior.

In our English Bible it is easy to misunderstand God's conversation with Cain. However, in the Hebrew language, it is quite evident that God urged Cain to take a lamb, crouching at the door, and offer it as a type of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that would one day be offered for the sins of mankind. Even so, Cain refused to do so. Thus he consciously rejected the Savior for the works of his own hands. This means, with what we have learned in the third chapter of first John, that it was at that point in time when Cain committed the unpardonable sin. This is the reason that the Scriptures tell us that *Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.*

It wasn't Cain's murder of Abel that made him of the *wicked one*. It was his hatred for the grace of God which prompted his actions. He, like the human family as a whole, believed he could have a right relationship with God through his knowledge of good and evil, received as a result of the fall of his father. Even though it is not directly stated in the Scriptures, we know that Cain thought according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways*

The Impossible Sin for the Fellowship

of death (Proverbs 14:12). So the concept of a vicarious atonement was entirely repugnant to him. He obviously thought that the stories he had heard about the sacrifice God had made for his parents were silly superstitions. Cain was so blinded by the lie of the devil that he was absolutely convinced he could be accepted of God on the basis of his own works. Thus the sin of Cain is a sin that is impossible for those who make up the true fellowship of Christ to commit, because they are indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Sometime after the rejection of his offering, Cain talked with Abel in the field. They undoubtedly argued for their respective positions, but Cain would not be convinced. His religious ego had been offended. It was then that his true nature was manifested -- he slew his brother. The account in Genesis does not tell us how he killed him, but, according to the meaning of the Greek word *sphadzo* used by John, he grabbed Abel and slit his throat as in a sacrifice. This rebellious act against the grace of God was born in Cain's fallen nature (the fruits of the evil tree), because his own works were of the evil one and Abel's works reflected his faith in the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ.

In closing, we cannot ignore the similarity between Cain and Abel and the relationship of the nation of Israel to the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Cain and Israel thought they could be justified before God by the works of their own hands and rejected the grace of God. Therefore John wrote: *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

Chapter XIV

THE LOVE OF THE FELLOWSHIP

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 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. 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. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 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. 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 (I John 3:14-24).

It is interesting to note that John wrote much about the love that believers are to have for one another and for a lost world as he concluded the third chapter of his first epistle. This was at a time when he had just identified the children of the devil. This was at a time when his critics might have accused him of being unloving for supplying the means of identifying those who are children of the devil. Nevertheless, despite the possible criticisms, John and genuine believers within the fellowship of Christ truly manifest love to one another and to a lost world; but the love

The Love of the Fellowship

that they manifest is not the sticky sentimentality of the world, it is the truth of the gospel. It is *how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures*. Thus, in the foreordained plan of God, it was the perfect life and the vicarious death of the God-Man (Jesus Christ) that satisfied the Holiness, Righteousness and Justice of God, so that God could have the judicial right to show forth His Mercy and Grace to sinners through His great Love:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:4-9, emphasis mine)

The true child of God (who understands the grace of God) does not view the world through self-righteous eyes of contempt, nor does he accuse others and excuse himself as the religious world often does. Rather, he has an innate desire for the salvation of the lost, and from the moment of his salvation he has an immediate kinship with the redeemed. This is the manifestation of love John wrote of. Consequently the believer (who has understanding) views the unsaved world with the thought: *But for the grace of God, there go I*, because he knows that he is a sinner who has been saved by grace. He knows he does not deserve an inheritance in heaven. He knows that if he were to get what he deserves, he would be cast into Hell's fire with the rest of the world. Thus redeemed sinners are overwhelmed by God's grace, and when the true believer reads and observes the terrible lost condition of the unsaved world, he remembers Paul's evaluation (in the first two chapters of Romans) of unsaved Jews and Gentiles. So, with Paul, he asks: *What then?*

The Love of the Fellowship

are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 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 3:9-18).

Our Lord spoke of God's love to Nicodemus, a Jewish Rabbi and member of the Sanhedrin Counsel: *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might*

The Love of the Fellowship

be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:7-18, emphasis mine).

Nicodemus was religious, but he was lost. He was a member of the ruling religious body of seventy elders in Israel, but he was lost. In such a position, he should have understood the grace of God that had been shown in the shadows and types of the sacrificial system, but he did not. He was lost. He should have known that the lifting up of the brasen serpent in the wilderness in behalf of the Jews was a foreshadowing of the crucifixion of the Christ, but he did not. He was lost. Even so our Lord did not argue with him about the merits or demerits of his religion -- He simply told him that he needed to be born from above (translated, *born again*). That is, he needed to be regenerated and made a new creation in Christ Jesus. Nicodemus, as with the Jews who had been bitten by serpents in the wilderness, was also infected with the venom from the sin of his father Adam; and, as typified with the lifted up serpent in the wilderness, the only solution to his condition was in the Person and work of Jesus Christ: *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* We know that Nicodemus came to believe our Lord's message of salvation, because after the crucifixion of our Lord, he and Joseph of Arimathaea (John 19:38-39) prepared our Lord's body for burial.

John wrote about a specific class of unsaved people in the third chapter of his epistle who put up a facade of being believers. To aid in their identification, he wrote: *He that loveth not his brother abideth in [the] death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer* The murderers

The Love of the Fellowship

John wrote about were those who had consciously rejected the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ for *a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12, emphasis mine). Thus they had added the necessity of law works to the doctrine of salvation. Those who were convinced by them to believe the lie in lieu of the truth continued to abide in death. Consequently they could not be translated out of death into life. So John continued: . . . *and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Further, our Lord said: *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 [which is to believe upon the Son]. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied [preached] in thy name? and in thy name have cast out [demons]? 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 [the] iniquity* (Matthew 7:21-23).

Remember, *the iniquity* was the singular lawlessness of Adam. It infected the human family with the concept that a man can be like God by what he does (Genesis 3:4-5). This is *a way that seemeth right unto a man.* This is the lie of the devil, and it is so much a part of the thinking of man that it is humanly impossible to change the minds of those who are steeped in its concepts. Man's mind can only be changed by the preaching of the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, which is a creative act of God. *Salvation is of the Lord.*

In the account of Cain and Abel in Genesis, Cain refused the truth that had been proclaimed by his father, because the offering he brought unto the Lord was bloodless. This means that it did not reflect his personal faith in God's promise of a Kinsman Redeemer. So, no

The Love of the Fellowship

matter how sincere Cain might have been, God could not accept his offering. It was contrary to the revealed will of God. Even so God was gracious to Cain. He encouraged him to offer a lamb (crouching at the door) as a type of Christ. (The crouching lamb is not apparent in our English Bible, but it is apparent in the Hebrew text.) Again, Cain refused. This second refusal to follow God's instructions for salvation resulted in Cain's commission of the unpardonable sin. There can be no mistake about this, because after God graciously pointed him to the lamb at the door, he consciously rejected the truth of God for the lie of the devil.

After that, Cain was wroth with Abel. He perceived that Abel was somehow responsible for the rejection of his offering. So, when the opportunity arose, he and Abel most likely argued the merits of their respective beliefs. Cain could not withstand the wisdom with which Abel spoke, so in a rage he slit his throat. When Abel was dead, God said: *What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment [iniquity] is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare*

The Love of the Fellowship

Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch (Genesis 4:10-17).

The Scriptures provide us with the genealogy of Cain in the fourth chapter of Genesis. From that text we learn that the direct lineage of Cain was not of sufficient size to populate the city he called Enoch. We must assume, then, that the other inhabitants of the city came from among the posterity of Adam that had been produced during the one hundred and thirty years that elapsed before the birth of Seth. These relatives of Cain must have been influenced by *the way of Cain*, so that when he traveled east after the death of Abel, they must have gone with him. It must also be assumed that it was from this number that he took his wife, because the Scriptures tell us, *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* (Amos 3:3) These conditions suggest that Cain was the spiritual leader of the city of Enoch. Since faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, and since Cain had refused the saving grace of Jesus Christ for his own manner of thinking (*the way of Cain [Jude 1:11]*), he could not proclaim the way of life to the inhabitants of his city. This means that Cain's sin against his family was even greater than his sin against Abel, because *the way of Cain* made him a spiritual murderer (an *anthropoktonos*) of the souls of those who inhabited the city of Enoch (Genesis 4:16-17). It also made him the spiritual murderer of those of subsequent generations that have followed *the way of Cain*.

The Greek word *anthropoktonos*, translated *murderer* in our text, is only found in two chapters of the New Testament: First John chapter three and John chapter eight. In both of these places it is used to describe those who slay men's souls -- the devil and false prophets. We have already looked at its use in the epistle of John, so let us consider its use in the Gospel of John.

The Love of the Fellowship

In the eighth chapter of John, our Lord spoke to Jews who had rejected the truth for the lie of the devil. He said: 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 [the] lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not (John 8:44-45, emphasis mine). This means that all who claim spiritual life from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are themselves spiritually dead, and they are the spiritual murderers of all who follow their pernicious way.

Returning to the third chapter of his epistle, John wrote: *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 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* (I John 3:11-12). The love that grips the believer and assures him of eternal life is not like the love of Cain. It is not self-centered love, it is Christ-centered love. Consequently it motivates the believer to see that the gospel is preached in all of the world. The reason for this, of course, is that the truth of the gospel is the only means of life to a world that is dead in trespasses and in sin. So John continued: *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. 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?*

Prior to His ascension into heaven, our Lord commissioned His church to preach the gospel in all of the world, when He said: *All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of*

The Love of the Fellowship

the Holy [Spirit]: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18-20). The motivation for fulfilling this commission is found in our text: *because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*. Thus, as with the relationship between Cain and Abel, there is an inherent danger in standing for the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ in a world that is steeped in the lie of the devil. Even so, the motivation of love tells us: *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*.

The *good* in this text is singular. It is not *goods* as is commonly supposed by the many charitable organizations that constantly quote it. It really should be capitalized, because it is a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation that is in Him and Him alone. Therefore it is not about meeting the physical needs of the poor, but the spiritual need of everyone who remains dead in trespasses and in sin. This third chapter of First John has been about the proclamation of the truth; therefore to depart from this context to speak of caring for the physical needs of the poor is contextually out of place. So John presented the concept that it is inconceivable for a man to be saved (possessing this world's Good) and to be unconcerned about the lost of this world. This does not mean that the believer is constantly accosting the unsaved about their lost condition. It means that when the believer is given the opportunity to proclaim the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ to lost acquaintances and contacts, he does not shirk the task. He considers it a privilege to share with others the grace that has been bestowed upon him. Some, like Cain, will

The Love of the Fellowship

be offended at the presentation of the truth; others will gladly receive it and be saved. Thus Paul wrote: *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour* (I Corinthians 3:6-8).

After speaking to the woman at the well, our Lord told His disciples: . . . *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured and ye are entered into their labours. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did* (John 4:34-39, emphasis mine).

In the New Testament we view the vast numbers of souls that were saved on Pentecost and beyond. The above text tells us that the disciples would reap a crop that they had not sown. This means that there is no greater reward for the one who reaps than for the one who sows, but they both rejoice in the end results, in which they both had a part.

This brings us again to our text: *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth*

The Love of the Fellowship

all things. 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. 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 (I John 3:18-24).

This means that each believer in Jesus Christ has been saved for a purpose. Ultimately, we shall have fellowship with the Godhead forever. In the meantime, God has given us spiritual gifts (that can be compared to body parts) to operate within the body of Christ for the furtherance of the gospel in all of the world. These gifts are for the edification, exhortation and comfort of believers as we are occupied with the fulfillment of the great commission in all of the world. If we feel that we have not always done our part, and our heart condemns us -- *God is greater than our heart*. If, however, we have been faithful in that which God has committed to our trust, *then we have confidence towards God*.

We are also assured while occupied with the ministry of the gospel to a lost world, that if we have needs to perform those things that the Lord has committed to our trust, the Lord will supply our needs, because we are actively engaged in keeping *his commandments*. These commandments are not the ten commandment, but as we have seen earlier, they are the things that God has spoken to us through His Word. Thus, *the just shall live by faith. And faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. Further, we know *that without faith it is impossible to please him*.

The Love of the Fellowship

In closing this chapter John said: *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.* Thus as we minister in the Word of God to a lost world to redeem them, and to those who are saved, to strengthen them in the things of the Lord, we are assured by our Lord's promise to the redeemed: *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you* (John 14:16-17).

Chapter XV

THE CONFESSION OF THE FELLOWSHIP

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

When I first became a Christian at age twenty-one, I was religiously naive like most new believers (I Corinthians 3:1). I thought that everything that had a steeple on it was a place where genuine believers met to worship our Wonderful Lord. Indeed it would be wonderful if that were true, but, sadly, it is not. There are many counterfeit Christians, and there are false prophets and false systems operating both inside and outside of the canopy of Christianity. The reason for this is, contrary to public opinion, the devil does his primary work in the spiritual realm, because man's fallen nature requires little outside encouragement to express itself in the realm of the flesh. Thus it is in the spiritual realm that the devil continues to spread the delusion that man can be accepted of God by the life that he lives. If man continues to think according to the fruit from the

The Confession of the Fellowship

evil tree, he will never see himself in need of the Savior. Therefore John warned the church how to protect itself from this continuing delusion: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

Additionally, the apostle Paul instructed the church at Ephesus to prepare themselves for a battle against *spiritual wickedness in high places*. As Paul closed his letter to the Ephesians, he wrote: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand* (Ephesians 6:10-13).

Long before the apostle Paul warned the Ephesians of *spiritual wickedness in high places*, our Lord Jesus Christ had warned His disciples of the tares that would be sown among the wheat and of wolves who would come in sheep's clothing to rend the flock. Our Lord also warned His disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees, the leaven of the Sadducees and the leaven of Herod. He warned that false prophets would be like thieves and robbers, thus indicating that some of them would boldly attack the truth face-to-face, and others would do their nefarious work by stealth. He also warned that the church age would be like a woman who would take three measures of meal and hide leaven in it, until the whole would be leavened. Interestingly, leaven is never used in the Scriptures in a good ethical sense. It always speaks of false doctrine or of sin. So the total leavening of the meal (which represents the church) will take place after the true church is

The Confession of the Fellowship

removed by the first resurrection and during the reign of the antichrist, when the whole world will worship the antichrist as the Christ, except for those who will be saved during the tribulation period (Revelation 13:8).

When John wrote, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*, this certainly indicates that my first impressions as a new believer were the naive thoughts of a babe in Christ. Our text also indicates that the spirits operating within organizations called churches must be tested. This testing, as the remainder of our text will show, is an agreement with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in His first advent. This is the true rendering of the Greek word *homologeo* in its context in John's epistle, even though it was translated *confess*. This agreement with God, as we have previously seen, is the only valid way to determine whether professing Christians walk according to the truth of the Word of God, being led of the Spirit of God, or whether they operate under the influence of another spirit, contrary to an agreement with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fact that the test of the spirits is doctrinal upsets much of the thinking of today's churches, because we live in an age of ecumenicism. The churches that came out of the Roman Catholic Church during the reformation period of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries are now seeking to return to full fellowship with the Roman church. If the basis for this fellowship were a true *unity of the Spirit* (based upon a rightly divided Word of God) that would be one thing, but it is not. It is unity for the sake of unity, and the actual unifying force for this ecumenical movement is an agreement upon *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are*

The Confession of the Fellowship

the ways of death. This is that aspect of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that produced the *pride of life.* This is the common denominator of all of the false religious systems of this world. Ironically, the other two aspects of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes) are never offered as a means of approaching God. In fact, the first two aspects of that tree are attacked by the third aspect, and this gives man the concept that every day and in every way, he is getting better and better.

There are no absolutes in this delusion. Everyone does that which is right in his own eyes, as the Jews did in ancient times (Judges 17:6), with the false hope that this will provide them with an inheritance in heaven. This is a direct denial of our Lord's statement, *I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6). Thus this dependence upon oneself is a non-confession of Jesus Christ. It makes our Lord a liar, and the Scriptures clearly teach that He cannot lie. Another unifying factor in the apostasy of the last days has been the modern tongues movement. The experience of speaking in tongues became very popular in the sixties, and it rapidly spread from denomination to denomination as a unifying experience. It seemed as though it could not be stopped, because the churches were ignorant of the true gift of tongues that had been manifested during the first century. Further this demonstration of ecstatic speech gave those who practiced it a sense of spiritual superiority, while being totally ignorant of the God of the Scriptures.

So, as we have already stated, a consideration of the attributes of God is an essential part of the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. For example, God is an Immutable, Omniscient and Holy God, Who cannot lie. Therefore we know that God cannot cause someone to operate under

The Confession of the Fellowship

the influence of the Spirit of God, contrary to the truth of the written Word of God. To do so would be a violation of the laws of congruity and of the attributes of God. God is always true to Himself and to His Word. He cannot be otherwise. Does it not then seem strange that the modern ecumenical movement has minimized the importance of doctrine as the basis for fellowship? Yet, contrary to the doctrine of salvation, the people who make up this movement almost universally deny the security of the believer, which was a direct promise to believers from the Lord Jesus Christ (John 10:27-28). While few of them would directly call our Lord a liar, they do so indirectly by denying His promise that His sheep shall never perish.

Jesus is described by the apostle John in the first chapter of his Gospel as the Word of God, Who was in the beginning with God. John also wrote of Him: *And 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.* And John wrote: *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* Thus our Lord Jesus Christ is the physical expression of the invisible God. So, by comparison, the Word of God (i.e., the Bible) reveals the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to those who are genuine believers in Jesus Christ, who *study to show [themselves] approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth.* Throughout the Scriptures, then, we get glimpses of the Person and work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; but these glimpses, for the most part, are revealed as they relate to God's unfolding plan of redemption. Thus, in this age when God is no longer directly manifesting Himself to man, the only way that man can know God is through the preaching of the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, because the age of direct revelation ended

The Confession of the Fellowship

with the completion of the written revelation of God, the Bible.

We know that the devil is the master of deceit. We also know that the devil is privy to certain portions of the Word of God that have been revealed. Therefore the devil uses the Word of God in a deceitful manner to serve his purposes, but, like the natural man, he *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Corinthians 2:14). Consequently most religious systems that operate according to the spirit of the error may quote the Scriptures, but they cannot put them together in a comprehensive way. They will always put them together according to *a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*.

John has indicated that the true Spirit is manifested by confessing that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. A cursory view of this text could mislead the reader. The reason for this, as we have seen, is found in the difference between the meaning of the English word *confess* and the Greek word *homologeō*, for which it stands. This takes us back once again to our previous studies and the meaning of the word *homologeō*. In English the word *confess* means *to admit*, but the Greek word *homologeō* means to say the same thing as another. Thus it means to be in agreement with another. The obvious other must be the Spirit of God, Who caused all of the Word of God to be written. Thus, if we confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, this means that we are in agreement with both the Old and the New Testament Scriptures, *rightly divided*, regarding the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that a Biblical confession of Jesus Christ recognizes that He is God, the Creator; that He is Eternal; that He is Omniscient; that He is Immutable; that He is Holy; that He is Righteous; that He is Just; that He is Merciful; that He

The Confession of the Fellowship

is Gracious, and that He is Love. To confess Christ requires that we understand that the eternal God became a Man, by means of the virgin birth; so that, in life He could stand in the stead of sinners and fulfill every jot and title of the law, and in death He could bear the judgment of the sinner's sins: so that in the resurrection He could conquer death in behalf of the sinner. This means that the confession of Christ is not a simple matter of saying, *I believe in Jesus*.

Anyone can say, *I believe in Jesus*. Does this make it so? If it does, then how do false prophets come to us in sheep's clothing? If it does, why has the apostle John enjoined believers: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*. Therefore a true confession of Christ recognizes Who He is in His Person and in His work. Remember, our Lord told the Jews, *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me*. Remember, also, that John wrote: *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is a*

The Confession of the Fellowship

partaker of his evil deeds (II John 1:4-11, emphasis mine).

Thus abiding in the doctrine of Christ and walking according to God's commandments (i.e., walking according to God's Word) are the true tests of the believer. They are also the true manifestations of the love of Christ. Superficial overt expressions of love rarely portray true love in the secular world, and they certainly do not express the love of Christ. Similarly, overt manifestations of piety or religious demonstrations are rarely associated with the truth.

We have learned: . . . *for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart* (I Samuel 16:7b). In view of this, what credibility do the modern tongues and ecumenical movements have? In their outward view, they seem to manifest love. In their outward view, they manifest extreme religious zeal. In their outward view, they claim to preach in the name of the Lord; they claim to have performed miracles in His name; they claim to have cast out demons in His name; and they claim to have spoken with *the voice of God and of angels*. So, we must ask, *Are their outward manifestations credible? Will they stand the test of the spirits?* The answer to our question, as we have already observed, must be a definite *No! They are, in fact, manifestations of another spirit!* Therefore, according to the Word of God, we are called to separate ourselves from them, lest we be partakers of their evil deeds. Further, the Spirit who indwells the genuine believer is an entirely different Spirit than the spirit that is in the world. So fellowship with non-confessors (in the sense of *homologeo*) is contrary to the Spirit of God Who indwells the genuine believer.

Remember, in warning the Jews about false prophets in their midst, our Lord said: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth*

The Confession of the Fellowship

*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 [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works [miracles]? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work [the] iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23). Remember also, John has taught us that *the sin is the iniquity*.*

Chapter XVI

THE SPIRIT OF THE TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF THE ERROR

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. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 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 [the] truth, and the spirit of [the] error (I John 4:4-6).

The pronouns *ye*, *you*, *we* and *us* in our text stand for those in the church to whom John wrote who were in agreement (according to the meaning of the Greek word *homologeō*) with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that there had been an occasion in the lives of each of them when they believed the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ and were saved. This was only possible, from a Biblical perspective, by the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, because the Scriptures tell us: *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe* (I Corinthians 1:21, emphasis mine). The Scriptures also tell us: *[F]aith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17). The unsaved man cannot come to faith on his own, because: *The natural man receiveth*

The Spirit of the Truth and the Spirit of the Error

not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthian 2:14, emphasis mine). Further, the apostle Paul stated: *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase* (I Corinthians 3:6-7).

It can be seen, then, not only did the Spirit of God enable John's audience to believe the truth of the gospel unto salvation, but, according to the promise of our Lord, He also entered into them to *abide with [them] for ever* (John 14:16). Thus, in this present age, with the preaching and teaching of the Word of God in the local church, the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God within believers is the source of spiritual growth and understanding; of the enabling of the believer's spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ; and of the comfort and assurance that God will perform all that He has promised them. Thus these promises will be fulfilled in God's way, in God's time and for God's glory.

In this regard, the apostle Paul wrote: *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with*

The Spirit of the Truth and the Spirit of the Error

the holy spirit of [the] promise, [Who] is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:7-14, emphasis mine).

Paul continued to elaborate on the quickening power of the Spirit of God when, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, he wrote: *And you . . . [being] dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of [the] disobedience: among whom also we all had our [manner of life] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:1-7, emphasis mine).

In addition to revealing the work of the Spirit of God in salvation, this portion of Scripture also reveals that the whole world has walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which continues to work in the children of *the disobedience*. The particular disobedience (suggested by the use of the definite article in the Greek text) was the disobedience of Adam (after Eve was deceived), when he willingly ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This disobedience and the consequences of it was not only charged to Adam and Eve, but it was charged to Adam's posterity, because his actions were the actions of a federal head. So, with salvation, those who were spiritually dead in Adam are made spiritually alive in Christ. He

The Spirit of the Truth and the Spirit of the Error

is the promised *seed* of the woman and the Federal Head of the redeemed. Thus contrasting these two federal heads provides the judicial basis for salvation: if one man's sin could plunge the entire world into sin, then one Man's vicarious life and death (fulfilling every jot and tittle of the law and all righteousness) could provide a holy, righteous and just basis for the redemption of those who trust Him as Savior (Romans 5:15-19).

The Greek word for *world* in our text is *kosmos*. *Kosmos* can have a number of different meanings, but in this particular text it is a reference to the order of things in the populated world since the fall of Adam and Eve. Paul told the Athenians that God *hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth*. Thus Adam's fallen nature and manner of thinking (after eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) was passed to his posterity by natural generation. Because of this, the unsaved world thinks according to its knowledge of good and evil, despite the fact that its moral perceptions can and do vary widely from one society to another. Thus, in the overall spectrum of moral conduct, there are no absolutes. In this regard, as in the days of Micah, *every man [does] that which [is] right in his own eyes* (Judges 17:6). Solomon referred to this manner of thinking, as we have repeatedly seen, as *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). Further, *The Merriam-Webster Third New International Dictionary*, in one of its definitions for *morality*, states: *morality is conduct conforming to the customs or accepted standards of a particular culture or group*.

This takes us back to the pronoun *they* in our text, where we read: *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them*. The *they* in this portion of our text

The Spirit of the Truth and the Spirit of the Error

refers to the non-confessors of Christ. It is they (despite any claims that they may have made that they are Christians) who are not in agreement with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that their professions of faith are false, because their minds have not been changed (Biblical repentance) from the merit system of the world to the grace system of God, because they continue to think as the world thinks (according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*). This, interestingly, is the reason that the world hears them. Therefore this provides us with a rather obvious fact: if the church falls into the trap of desiring to be rich, with great numbers, it is far more likely to increase its numbers (like the mustard plant in our Lord's parable) by emphasizing the moral conduct of its members, rather than standing for the truth of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Remember, our Lord said: *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it* (Matthew 7:13-14, emphasis mine). In this same regard, the apostle Paul wrote: *For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not [Sarah, who represent grace and faith]; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate [Hagar, who represents the flesh] hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free* (Galatians 4:27-31, emphasis mine).

The Spirit of the Truth and the Spirit of the Error

This means that those who are in agreement with God about the Person and the work of Christ will always be fewer in number than those who believe in *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. Since man looks upon the outward appearance and God looks upon the heart, those who know the truth will always be in the minority. Therefore the influence of the preaching of the truth in the world will always require the quickening power of the Spirit of God, with the Word of God, to change the minds of those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. As long as the world thinks according to the spirit of the disobedience, it cannot (of itself) confess, in the Biblical sense of *homologeō*, that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Thus they who make up the unsaved populous of this world will continue to be *children of wrath*, because they have not believed on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:18-19). This means that they will continue in their spiritually dead condition, because they cannot make themselves spiritually alive with the concepts derived from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of that tree cannot produce life. It always produces death!

As we have been addressing the three epistles of John, we have gained a sense of the feeling Jude must have felt when he wrote: *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ* (Jude 1:3-4).

The enemies of the cross were active in Jude's day, and they have not lessened their

The Spirit of the Truth and the Spirit of the Error

pernicious activities in the day in which we live. Despite giving lip service to faith in Christ, they still attack the grace of God, substituting the works of man for the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul wrote of them in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness* (Romans 1:16-18, emphasis mine). So, as Jude had revealed that the enemies of the gospel had claimed that grace produced lasciviousness, Paul revealed that the same sort of men held the truth (of the saving grace of Jesus Christ) to be unrighteous. Later, in the same chapter in Romans, Paul revealed that these men *changed the truth of God into [the] lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator Nevertheless Paul exposed their folly: And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them* (Romans 1:28-32, emphasis mine).

In this church age, it would be wonderful if we could always speak in positive terms,

The Spirit of the Truth and the Spirit of the Error

extolling the marvelous grace of God. It would be wonderful if we never had to warn our people of false prophets, false Christs and false teachings, but this is not possible: *[B]ecause [our] adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour* (I Peter 5:8). Consequently the apostle Paul warned: *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple* (Romans 16:17-18).

This means that a good pastor, like a good parent, must teach his people of the dangers of this world's system. The devil is the avowed enemy of God and of the people of God. His efforts to destroy the work of the Lord will not end until our Lord has cast him into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). Our Lord has taught us that while men slept, the devil has been busy sowing tares among the wheat. The tares are those who come to us professing to be believers in Jesus Christ, but at some point in time they will show their true character by denying some aspect of the Person or the work of Christ. This means that the true believer must be on his guard, testing the spirits whether they be of God or not. Thus *the Spirit of the truth* will always be in agreement with God about the Person and the work of Christ; and *the spirit of the error* will always deny some aspect of the Person or the work of Christ by adding the fruits of the evil tree into the doctrine of salvation, either to gain it or to maintain it.

Chapter XVII

HEREIN IS THE LOVE

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. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God (I John 4:10-15).

We stated earlier that the Greeks used four distinct words to describe various aspects of the one English word, *love*. To make the four distinctions in English, most of the time we need to use descriptive phrases. Since the King James translators sought to provide a word-for-word translation of the Greek into English, there are no descriptive phrases to aid us. Since most of us do not read Greek, and since our English translation makes no effort to reveal what sort of love is the subject of the text (other than, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us*), it is incumbent upon us to use interlinear translations and Greek-English concordances to discover what word was used. Having discovered the word, we must consult the lexicons to determine what meaning of the word best fits the context. Even then, in our present text, we will not have all of the

Herein is the Love

information we need for a proper interpretation of the text. The reason for this is that in the Greek text John wrote: *Herein is the love* This means, because of the use of the (untranslated) definite article, John supplied a specific definition for the form of love used in the text. Further, the remainder of the text supplies the information necessary to discover John's specific use of *agape* (translated love).

It should be evident, then, that if the reader of John's epistle is not aware that there are four Greek words for *love*; or if he is aware that there are four, but he does not make an effort to discover what word or words are used in this text; or if he is not aware that John gave a special significance to *agape*, by use of the definite article, all sorts of misconceptions can arise in an effort to understand this text and many other texts found throughout the New Testament. This, of course, can only happen if the individual is without spiritual understanding, which is provided by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God and the diligent study of the doctrine of salvation, found throughout the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

The differences between two of the four Greek words for *love*, and our one word for *love*, is well illustrated in an incident that took place after the resurrection of our Lord, when Jesus met His disciples at the sea of Galilee (Tiberias). John carefully recorded the words of our Lord and of Peter in his description of that meeting. However, in our English translation, we cannot see that our Lord used one word for *love* and Peter used another, nor can we see that the third time our Lord questioned Peter, He used the word that Peter had been using. Thus, for the sake of clarity, I have provided a free translation of the word that Peter used and that our Lord later used. This will aid us in our understanding of the conversation between our Lord and Peter, and it will

Herein is the Love

also enable us to understand why Peter was grieved when our Lord asked him the third time:

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into [the] ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest [agapas] thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that *I am fond of you*. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest [agapas] thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that *I am fond of you*. He saith unto him, [Shepherd] my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, *are you fond of me?* Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, *Are you fond of me?* And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that *I am fond of you*. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep (John 21:1-17, insertions and free translation are mine).

There are a few things in this text that can be easily missed without a reference to the Greek text. First, as translated, *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing*. Then his former fishing partners agreed to go with him, and the Greek text tells us that they entered into *the ship*.

Herein is the Love

The definite article is not present in our English translation, but its presence in the Greek text indicates that Peter's intent was not a casual outing, because he actually said: *I go to fish*. This suggests that Peter's intent was to return to the business of fishing, and this is confirmed by the fact that they entered into *the ship*. This was a specific ship, which means it was probably the one they had used when they fished for a living. Second, they labored all night, and they caught nothing. (This, too, confirms that they had returned to their old trade, because of the duration of their efforts.) In the morning, our Lord called to them: *Children, have ye any meat?* They responded, *No*. He then told them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and they caught so many fish that they were afraid the net would break. Third, this draught of fishes must have triggered John's memory of a similar draught of fishes three years earlier, at the time when the Lord called them to be fishers of men (Luke 5:3-10). Therefore John said: *It is the Lord*. Peter, then, cast himself into the sea and swam to the shore. Fourth, after our Lord had fed them bread and fish, He questioned Peter: *Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these?* The probable antecedent for *these* deduced from the context is the fish that they had just caught. We must not forget, that while they had all gone to fish, they had done so at the suggestion of Peter. This seems, then, to be the reason the Lord directed His questions to Peter, rather than to all of them. Fifth, it must also be observed, that with each question about the extent of Peter's love, the Lord gave him a command that was relevant to his call to be a fisher of men, not a fisher of fish -- He told him to feed His lambs, to shepherd His sheep and to feed His sheep.

It can be seen by our bracketed insertions that the first two times our Lord questioned Peter about his love for Him, He used a verb from the root word *agapao*, which is the highest form of

Herein is the Love

love in Greek. Even so, Peter responded with a verb from the root word *philos* (as can be seen by our free translations). *Philos* is a lesser degree of love -- one that expresses affection or friendship; but it is not the sort of love that would be necessary for Peter to fulfill the commands of our Lord.

Many years after this incident, after serving the Lord faithfully, Peter wrote: *And above all things have fervent love [agapao] among yourselves: for love [agapao] shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality [philos] one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God* (I Peter 4:8-10). This text reveals that Peter obviously knew the differences between *agapao* and *philos*, so when the Lord changed from *agapao* to *philos* in His conversation with Peter at the sea of Galilee, it broke Peter's heart. Nevertheless, as can be seen in this text, Peter knew that his call to be a fisher of men required more than an affectionate relationship with the Lord; but, at that point in time, Peter did not know that by the grace of God and the indwelling Spirit of God, the Lord would enable Peter to show forth the kind of love He questioned him about at the sea of Galilee (despite Peter's failed boast in the upper room [John 13:37] and his reticence to describe his love for the Lord with the word *agapao*). Nevertheless, with his growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, Peter did show forth a reciprocal response to the Lord's love (manifested on Calvary) throughout the remainder of Peter's life and ministry (II Peter 1:13-14). Even though Peter was grieved, the translator did not make a distinction between the two words used in the text, but provided a confusing translation of a question asked and answered, asked again and answered and asked a third time and answered, using only the word *love* for the two Greek words

Herein is the Love

used in the text. To my mind, there is only one reason for not using *fondness*, *affection*, or *friendship* for the Greek word *philos* -- the translator did not seem to know the difference between *philos* and *agapao*. While this seems unlikely, it cannot be assumed that the translators had extensive vocabularies in the Greek language. Any expansion of their vocabularies, as in English, would have required a wide range of exposure to many words and their various uses within the structure of the language. Thus, as in English, one translator's vocabulary could vary widely from the vocabulary of another translator.

Additionally, there is evidence in our English Bible to suggest that the translators did not always understand what they were translating, because they ignored some words and translated some words in different tenses or moods than those in the text, or that fit the text they were translating. We must understand that the translators of the King James Bible were all Anglican churchmen; but it would be foolish to assume they were all saved men, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. It would also be foolish to assume that they translated without bias, unaffected by the doctrines of the Anglican church. If, indeed, some of them were unsaved, then they could not understand the things of the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 2:14). This does not mean that our English Bible cannot be trusted. It means that the man of God must study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

Thus, returning to our text, John wrote: *Herein is [the] love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* This means that the specific love John used in this text is the love God showed forth in the propitiatory work of the Lord Jesus

Herein is the Love

Christ on the cross of Calvary. In fact, John used the same word for love (*agapao*) in this text as he did in recording the conversation between our Lord and Nicodemus. In our text in First John, as we mentioned earlier, the word *propitiation* does not convey the same idea in English as the word it stands for does in Greek and Hebrew. We also mentioned that in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the root word that was used to describe the lid of the ark of the covenant (known as the mercy seat) was from the same root word in Greek that was translated *propitiation* in our text. It seems that the translator was not aware of this connection, because in English *propitiation* is commonly used to describe the appeasement of an angry god. The propitiatory work of the Lord Jesus Christ was not about appeasement, it was about the satisfaction of God's Holiness, Righteousness and Justice, through the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that God could have a righteous basis to bestow His Love, Mercy and Grace upon sinners, to the satisfaction of all of His attributes.

Thus propitiating an angry God misses the mark completely when it comes to *the love* that John wrote about, because the text itself shows us: *Herein is [the] love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* In this text, the sinner is not the active one in this propitiation (according to the context), God is. This means that the love of John's text is the love our Lord expressed to Nicodemus, when he came to Him by night. During their conversation, our Lord said: *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved [agapao] the world, that he gave*

Herein is the Love

his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:13-16, emphasis mine). Thus the love John wrote about in his Gospel and in his epistle was the love expressed in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary; and this is the love that believers are to express to one another and to a lost world through the gospel.

We mentioned earlier that the translators did not always understand what they were translating. This is clearly illustrated in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians, where the apostle Paul likened the spiritual gifts of believers to the various parts of a human body. The primary point of Paul's instructions to the Corinthians was that spiritual gifts were/are given by God according to His sovereign will. Therefore he wrote: *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will* (I Corinthians 12:11). Paul went on to illustrate how that spiritual gifts function within the body of Christ, like body parts function within the human body. Then he wrote: *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues* (I Corinthians 12:25-28). This delineation is from the highest to the lowest, without mentioning all of the gifts of the Spirit.

At this point in his argument, the apostle Paul asked a series of rhetorical questions, all of which required a negative answer: *Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?*

Herein is the Love

(I Corinthians 12:29-30) Since the grammar of this text required a negative answer to each of these questions, it is perfectly clear (according to the context) that the gifts of the Spirit were given by the will of the Holy Spirit for the edification of the church and not for the glory of the individual.

Even so, at this point in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the translator did a strange thing: he took a Greek word, *zeloute*, that can be one of three different moods in the Greek language (second person plural present indicative; second person plural present imperative; or second person plural present subjunctive), and he put it in the imperative mood. It appears that the translator merely selected one of the three moods for *zeloute* without examining the text, because the context clearly required that *zeloute* should have been translated in the indicative mood. Paul did not command the Corinthians to *eagerly covet the best gifts*, he told them that this was what they were doing, *and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way*.

Since John's definition for *love* was manifested in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, the subject of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is not *charity* (as translated), it is the love of Christ. Consequently, if we insert the phrase *the love of Christ* for *charity* in this chapter, it will remove all doubt about the *more excellent way* Paul referred to in the twelfth chapter; it will reveal that the believer is to operate by faith (motivated by the love that was manifested in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ), with the gifts that God has given him:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *the love of Christ*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not *the love of Christ*, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not *the love of Christ*, it profiteth me nothing.

Herein is the Love

The love of Christ suffereth long, and is kind; *the love of Christ* envieth not; *the love of Christ* 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 [the] iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. *The love of Christ* never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall [be rendered useless]; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall [be rendered useless].

For we know [out of] part, and we prophesy [out of] part. But when that which is perfect is come [the New Testament Scriptures], then that which is [out of] part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know [out of] part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, *the love of Christ*, these three; but the greatest of these is *the love of Christ* (I Corinthians 13:1-13, insertions and emphasis mine).

In the latter part of this quotation, the apostle Paul stated that *the love* was greater than faith or hope. The reason for this (using John's definition for *love*) is that there is no basis for faith or hope, apart from the manifestation of the love of Christ for the sinner on the cross of Calvary. Faith and hope are both predicated upon the completed work of Jesus Christ for the redemption of man, which (according to John's definition and the apostle Paul's use of the word) is expressed in the Greek word *agape*.

Thus in each age, the churches of Jesus Christ have been given the command to preach the gospel in all of the world. The gospel is . . . *how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures* (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Therefore, in our text, John wrote: *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*. In our expression of this love, we cannot die as a vicarious atonement for one another, but we can endeavor to share the truth of the gospel with friends and relatives, and we can support the preaching of the gospel to a lost world.

Herein is the Love

Again, in our text in First John, John reminded his audience: *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected [grows to maturity] in us.* This, too, was manifested in the *more excellent way* of Paul. So, John continued: *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God* (I John 4:13-16). Thus agreement with God about the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ assures the one who makes such a confession of his salvation. It also assures the confessor of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God.

This, too, takes us back to Paul's instructions to the Corinthians about the exercise of the spiritual gifts that God has given us within the framework of the love of Christ. First, to have been given a gift of the Spirit, one must be a believer in Jesus Christ and be indwelt by the Spirit of God, because Paul wrote: *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* (Romans 8:9b). Second, our text tells us: *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* Thus we cannot be indwelt with the Spirit of God if we are not in agreement with God about the Person and the work of His Son Jesus Christ; and if we are in agreement with God about His Son: . . . *the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new*

Herein is the Love

[creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath [changed us completely] to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of [changing completely]; to wit, that God was in Christ, [changing completely] the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of [changing completely]. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye [changed completely] to God. 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 (II Corinthians 5:14-21). Herein [according to John's definition] is the love!

Chapter XVIII

MATURING IN THE LOVE OF GOD

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 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. 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. We love him, because he first loved us. 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. (I John 4:15-21).

As we come to this portion of John's epistle, John began to expand upon certain truths which he had introduced earlier in this epistle. Therefore we have already learned that the word *homologeō* was used by the Greeks to express an agreement with another, or (Scripturally) an agreement with the Spirit of God about Jesus Christ. We have also seen that the English word *confess* (used by the translators for *homologeō*) does not actually convey the same sense of agreement as *homologeō*, but it can simply mean *an admission*. It is very important, then, for the believer to understand the difference between an admission and an agreement, because any false prophet who comes to us *in sheep's clothing* can say that Jesus is the Son of God. He can freely

Maturing in the Love of God

admit that this is so without the slightest conviction regarding the Lord's Person or His work. This means that he can hold to all sorts of false concepts regarding the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, but still claim that Jesus is his Savior.

It must be understood that this claim is not a Biblical confession of Christ. Rather, it is an admission based upon the commandments and doctrines of men, which has its roots in *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12). It is the devil's lie. This means that a false confessor will ultimately involve his personal works of righteousness in his concepts of salvation, because he still thinks according to his knowledge of good and evil, received in disobedience to God. This makes it difficult for him to make a distinction between what he thinks, and what the religions of this world think. The reason for this is found in the temptation of the woman, because the serpent promised Eve she would be like God through her acquisition of a knowledge of good and evil. Thus the common denominator of the religions of this world is an introspective form of morality. In this regard, a word of explanation is required -- there is nothing wrong with doing the right thing, but when personal righteousness becomes necessary for salvation, or to maintain salvation, then it is an expression of the devil's lie and not the truth of the gospel.

Therefore the involvement of personal righteousness in the doctrine of salvation is probably the most common false confession under the canopy of Christianity. In the early church it manifested itself in the *other gospel* of the Judaizers, which was introduced into the churches of Galatia by Pharisees from the church at Jerusalem. They professed to be believers in Christ, but they were not. This *other gospel* spread throughout the early churches, but it ultimately had its

Maturing in the Love of God

greatest success in the church at Rome. This occurred under the Roman Emperor Constantine when he merged the church with the state of Rome, thus forming the Roman Catholic Church. This merger was prophesied by our Lord in His parable of the mustard seed, which grew into a tree and housed the birds of the air (i.e., the devil). As the church at Rome grew in wealth and stature, it attracted the basest of men to rule over it. This resulted in its departure from its former understanding of the truth of the grace of God. After a period of time, certain members within the Roman church began to rebel against some of the more overt Roman doctrines. This ultimately led to the Protestant Reformation Movement, which formed the ten toes of the fourth world empire of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 2:40-44). Despite the fracturing of the Roman Church during the reformation movement, many of the churches that were formed did not separate themselves entirely from Roman doctrine. Therefore many Protestant churches continue to believe in baptismal regeneration, confirmation, and some sort of reparation for sin after salvation.

The Scriptures are very clear about the fact that no one can be justified by the law, because . . . *there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Our Lord taught the Jews that if they desired to be justified by law, all they had to do was be perfect (Matthew 5:48). This is not possible because man is born spiritually dead, and he is under the sentence of physical death because of the sin of Adam. The Scriptures also tell us, that if it were even possible for man to be justified by the deeds of the law (and it is not), then Christ died in vain (Galatians 2:21). Therefore, in terms of an agreement with God, these false ideas deny both the Person and the work of Christ.

It is important, in this respect, for the believer to understand that while it is possible for

Maturing in the Love of God

a counterfeit believer to parrot spiritual truth, it is impossible for him to discover the truth of the Scriptures for himself (I Corinthians 2:14), because he is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:5). It is also important to recognize that within churches that hold to these false doctrines, there are genuine Christian believers who have been saved despite the doctrines held by these churches. Even so, if the false prophet did not have these parrot-like abilities (which provide him with his *sheep's clothing*), he would be immediately recognized as a false prophet, and he could never come to a position in the church like the one held by Diotrephes (III John 1:9-11). This means that the counterfeit believer can put up a facade of being a true believer, but (because he is not a true believer) it is impossible for him to parrot a consistent testimony regarding Jesus Christ for any extended period of time, because he does not understand the truths he parrots.

As we continue with our present text, John showed the members of the *elect lady* (by use of *homologeō* in the aorist-tense and the subjunctive mood), that *Whosoever may have found himself in agreement with God that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God* (I John 4:15, free translation, based upon the Greek text). This agreement occurred when the Spirit of God quickened the truth of the gospel to the heart of the individual, to provide him with the faith to believe and be saved. Thus, with salvation, our text tells us that God dwells in the believer, and the believer dwells in God. The word *dwelt* in our text is *meno*. *Meno* means to *abide*; therefore it speaks of a continuous condition, but a condition that was wrought by the Lord and not by the efforts of the believer. Therefore our Lord promised that the Spirit of God would abide within the believer forever (John 14:16). This indwelling presence of the Spirit of God within the believer is God's earnest (pledge) that God will perform all that He has promised the

Maturing in the Love of God

believer in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:13-14). This means that the believer has eternal life and shall never perish (John 10:28).

Even so, the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God does not automatically supply the new believer with a complete understanding of all of the theological ramifications of salvation; but the Spirit's presence within an individual believer has provided him with spiritual life (by the regeneration of his human spirit, through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God), and His presence provides the believer with the capacity for spiritual growth, but growth is a developmental process. We all understand the lack of maturity in infant children, but we may not understand that the newly born again believer also lacks maturity, and must, therefore, be nourished in the things of the Lord.

This can be seen in our Lord's parable of the Sower, where the emphasis was upon the various types of ground upon which the seed sown might fall. It is important to understand our Lord's parable -- it is about different kinds of believers, because if the seed germinated, it had life and thus represents a believer with eternal life. We also saw that the cultivated ground produced abundantly, but the shallow ground and the ground with thorns and thistles produced scant little. This was due to misdirected motives and little (in terms of nutrients) to grow on. Thus the development of believers into maturity was emphasized by Peter in his epistle, when he commanded babes in Christ to *desire the sincere [guileless] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby* (I Peter 2:2). When the babe in Christ grows in the truth of the Word of God, his agreement with God also grows into a more complete understanding of the Love of God, which growth, ideally, continues throughout his lifetime.

Maturing in the Love of God

The apostle Paul instructed Timothy in this same vein, even though Timothy had been his companion and fellow worker for many years. Paul did this because he had learned that Timothy had exhibited some shame towards him and towards the Lord during Paul's imprisonment at Rome. Therefore Paul wrote: Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and 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, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 1:8-13, emphasis mine).

The shame Timothy felt had undoubtedly been instigated by some Jews with whom he had become acquainted. This is implied in Paul's first epistle to Timothy, when he advised him: *Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith . . .* (I Timothy 1:4). In the same epistle, Paul instructed Timothy in the *lawful use of the law*, because Timothy had apparently become interested in his Jewish heritage, and this interest and association with some Jews was affecting his relationship with the apostle Paul. Timothy certainly knew the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, but the Jews with

Maturing in the Love of God

whom he had become acquainted would have been quick to point out the fact that Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified. According to the Scriptures, this would have made Him accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). These Jews would have also been quick to point out that the apostle Paul was imprisoned at Rome, and (from their perspective) this must have been due to some fault of his. Therefore Paul admonished Timothy for his shame, and he provided him and us with the solution for such feelings. Thus he wrote: *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (II Timothy 2:15, emphasis mine).

Rightly dividing the word of truth means that the man of God (who diligently studies the Word of God) will be able to put the different parts of Scripture and the different covenant relationships together without contradictions. To illustrate this truth in my preaching, I often compare *rightly dividing the word of God* with putting a picture puzzle together. A piece of the puzzle may look as if it will fit into a particular spot in the picture. The colors and the shape of the piece may seem to fit the overall scene, but if the piece does not fit perfectly, it is the wrong piece. Since the process of knowing how the pieces of Scripture fit together requires study and growth, we must be careful to distinguish between a lack of spiritual growth and a denial of spiritual truth. The babe in Christ lacks growth, whereas the counterfeit cannot grow, because he is spiritually dead.

Thus John continued with his argument to show the church to whom he wrote that as they would continue to mature in their understanding of the love of God, they would gain a boldness that would enable them to cast off fear, because *There is no fear in [the] love*. John's use of the

Maturing in the Love of God

definite article before love indicates that he was referring specifically to the love of God. Even so, those who fail to mature in their understanding of the love of God (as expressed in our text and in the truth of the gospel) will show forth fear due to a lack of understanding. Therefore the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able* (I Corinthians 3:1-2). Further, Peter expressed the same truth with a slightly different slant when he wrote: *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen* (II Peter 3:18).

My father in the Lord (the late Dr. Artel Stewart) used to say, *If you do not grow in grace, you will never have any real knowledge of the Word of God.* This is absolutely true, because the relationship of the believer with the Lord is entirely a relationship of grace, which is the unmerited favor of God. This means that the redeemed certainly do not deserve to be redeemed: *For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Therefore, in order to approach the Scriptures properly, we must understand that about two-thirds of the Bible was written during the covenant of the law (or just after the new covenant was activated). It is very easy, then, for a neophyte believer to be led into the trap of legalism, because the believer's mind agrees with every precept of the law, but he does not have the power to keep those precepts perfectly (Romans 7:24-25). The apostle Paul fell into this trap shortly after his salvation (as seen in the context of the previous reference). This was before Paul spent three years with the Lord in Arabia (compare Galatians 1:11-18 with Acts 9:22-27). During those years, the Lord revealed

Maturing in the Love of God

the truth of the grace of God to Paul in a way that was beyond the understanding of the other apostles. Their ministry with the Lord had been during the covenant of the law, before the Lord's death, burial and resurrection had put the New Covenant into effect. Consequently our Lord's emphasis with the apostles had been upon *the lawful use of the law* (with Jews who were under the covenant of the law), but His emphasis with Paul was upon the new covenant, which (for Jews and Gentiles) is entered by grace through faith.

So, armed with the knowledge revealed to him by the Lord, the apostle Paul later wrote to the Ephesians: *And you . . . [being] dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of [the] disobedience: among whom also we all had our [manner of life] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:1-9, emphasis mine).*

This brings us to John's next statement: *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in [the] love dwelleth in God, and God in him. A belief in the love of God is a belief in the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It was this*

Maturing in the Love of God

truth, quickened to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that brought us to faith in Christ. Consequently our Lord told the Rabbi, Nicodemus: *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God* (John 3:13-18).

In our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, He spoke to him about the concept of the new birth. Even though Nicodemus was a Rabbi and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, these concepts puzzled him. It was then that our Lord used an historical incident in the history of Israel to explain God's love to Nicodemus. Our Lord reminded him of the unbelief of the Jews prior to their entrance into the land. The account is found in the book of Numbers:

And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (Numbers 21:4-9)

It was the events associated with the Jews' rebellion and God's judgment of the fiery

Maturing in the Love of God

serpents that enabled our Lord to teach Nicodemus the truth of the new birth, which is a manifestation of the love of God. Since it was a serpent that deceived Eve in the garden, the serpent represents sin. The consequences of the serpent's poison (i.e., the lie of the devil) was death, for Paul wrote: *For the wages of [the] sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans 6:23). It is not personal sin that produced death, it was Adam's sin, and the death it produced was both spiritual and physical. Therefore the solution to both physical and spiritual death was the judgment of the sins of the world in Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. Thus the brasen serpent, lifted up on a pole (i.e. a cross), represents the judgment of sin in Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. The command to the Jews, that whosoever would look at the lifted-up serpent would live, is a portrayal of saving faith. Therefore the entire episode of the lifted-up serpent was a portrayal of God's love, manifested in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Further, the salvation of those Jews who looked by faith to the lifted up serpent reveals the sum total of human effort involved in the doctrine of salvation. So, as they did with the lifted up serpent, we look to Christ in a simple act of faith, believing that what God has promised, He is able also to perform.

As John continued with our text, he wrote: *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* (I John 4:17-18). A more careful look at this Scripture in the Greek text is beneficial. Freely translated, it could read: *In this the love of God has been perfected in us, that we may have boldness in the day of the judgment.* In other words, if the love of God has grown

Maturing in the Love of God

to maturity in the believer (as it should), then the believer can boldly look to the judgment seat of Christ without fear, because as Christ is, so are we in this world. This means that in the judicial reckoning of God, the believer stands in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:21). Therefore the love of God, grown to maturity within the understanding of the believer, casts fear away; but if there is fear in the believer's relationship with the Lord, he has not grown to maturity in the love of God as he should, and in any given situation this can produce fear.

Once the believer truly understands his judicial relationship with God, he knows that he is secure in Christ. John said it this way: *because as he is, so are we in this world*. The apostle Paul explained this truth one way to the Colossians and another way to the Corinthians, but the truth is the same. To the Colossians he wrote: *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. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory* (Colossians 3:1-4). In this portion of Scripture, Paul assumes that the believer understands that through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, God counts the believer to have died with Christ, to have been buried with Christ, and to have been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life, which is a walk of faith. Therefore the believer is counted dead, and the life that is viewed by God is the life of faith, in which the believer functions in his God given gifts, empowered by the Spirit of God. Since, *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*; and since the new covenant states: *their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*, our text tells us: . . . *as he is, so are we in this world*. Further, Paul wrote to the Corinthians of this same judicial relationship: *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who*

Maturing in the Love of God

knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (II Corinthians 5:21).

At this point in his text, John returned to his theme, which for our understanding is best viewed through the use of a paraphrase: *There is no fear in the love of God; but the love of God grown to maturity, casteth off fear: because without a mature understanding of the love of God, we are apt to fear, and fear brings torment. Therefore he that has fear in his relationship with God has not matured in his understanding of the love of God (i. e., the truth of the gospel), and is a babe. Consequently, our love for God is based upon His love for us. Moreover, this love is manifested in our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ; so that if a man says that he loves God, and hates his brethren, he is a liar. How can he say that he loves God, Whom he has not seen, and hate his brethren, whom he has seen? So, if those who profess faith in Christ are walking in the truth of the gospel, and have a reciprocal love for God, they will also love those who have been brought into the family of God by the same love.*

This does not mean that the believer loves everyone who names the name of Christ, because many who do this are not their brethren at all, but they are children of the wicked one, and are thus the enemies of the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This returns us to our understanding of *homologeō*, the word translated *confess*, which is an agreement with God, not a simple admission. David spoke of them in the Psalms, and has thus given us the proper perspective for the expression of the love of God: *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me,*

Maturing in the Love of God

O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:19-24, emphasis mine).

Chapter XIX

WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST

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. 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. 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? (I John 5:1-5).

It is sometimes necessary for us to think beyond the words before us as we read our King James Bibles, or any other translations of the Scriptures. The reason for this is that the translation may convey ideas that are contrary to Scriptural principles we know to be true. This is not done capriciously, because these principles have been well established through many years of the diligent study of the Word of God, *comparing spiritual things with spiritual things* (I Corinthians 2:13-14) -- that is, comparing Scripture with Scripture.

These problems do not arise often, but when they do we believers must be ready to face them without fear. We have seen several examples of this in previous studies. The best of these for our present purpose is the comparison between I John 3:7 and Titus 3:5. These two verses, as translated, directly contradict one another. Even so, drawing from our understanding of the

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

Scriptures, we know that *All scripture is given by inspiration of God*. Therefore we know there has to be an adequate explanation for what appears to be a contradiction, because God cannot lie. Further, our knowledge of the Scriptures suggests that the problem is in I John 3:7, not in Titus 3:5. A view of our Greek New Testament and lexicons confirms our suspicions, because they reveal that the translator of this portion of John's epistle did not choose the definition for *poieo* that agrees with the Biblical position of salvation by grace, apart from the deeds of the law. Our lexicon reveals that the primary meaning of *poieo* is *to make*. Its secondary meaning is *to do*. So, despite the translator's choice of *do*, we know that *make* is the correct definition for *poieo* in this text, because *make* provides an agreement between these two verses, and it also provides a confirmation of the believer's judicial standing before God.

This standing is revealed in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: *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* (II Corinthians 5:21). This judicial act took place at the moment of salvation, when the Spirit of God baptized the believer into the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord. From that moment on, the believer has been judicially charged with the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, so that Christ's righteousness is his righteousness. The only *doing* (required of the believer in this judicial standing) is the believer's mental alignment with the truth of his position in Christ. Thus the apostle Paul wrote the Colossians: *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. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory* (Colossians 3:1-4, emphasis

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

mine). This is not to say that the believer has no active part in the service of the Lord. He does; but what the believer does, he does by faith (operating in the spiritual gifts that God has given him), and motivated by thanksgiving for the grace of God.

Considering these truths, it could never be said of a believer that he stands justified before God by the life that he lives. This understanding is fundamental to the truth of the gospel. We must remember our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane: *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me* This prayer was not for His sake, but for ours. The cup did not pass from our Lord, because the only possible way the human family could be restored to the image of God was by the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Our Lord also told His disciples: *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour* (John 12:27). Prior to this, our Lord alluded to His death. He said: *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* Therefore we have salvation by God's grace through faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in our behalf.

The procedure we followed (in dealing with the aforementioned contradiction) emphasizes the need for viewing the Scriptures in the light of Who they reveal God to be. This rule of interpretation should have been evident to the translators, but in some texts it is not apparent that it was. It sometimes appears that the translators were motivated more by the fact that they were Anglican churchmen than that they were duty bound as professing Christian scholars to translate with congruity (because of the immutability of God), and not according to the commandments and doctrines of men.

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

The Scriptures reveal that God is Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Immutable, Holy, Righteous, Just, and that He is a God of Love, Mercy and Grace. They also reveal that the very Essence of God is Truth; therefore it is impossible for God to lie. This means that there can be no contradictions or misstatements in a rightly divided Word of God, because, as noted above, *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*. Therefore, when contradictions seem to arise in the Scriptures, we know that their source cannot be with God. Therefore they must have their source in man. The men who had the opportunity and the motive to introduce the doctrines of men into the Scriptures were the men who translated our Bible from the Hebrew and Greek into English.

Therefore we are compelled to find the answers to these seeming contradictions, because it is not possible for the inspired Word of God to contain contradictions. Since the Scriptures are inspired of God, and since God cannot lie, it is only possible for contradictions to be in the translations of the Scriptures, and not in the inspired Scriptures themselves. Solving these problems is an investigative procedure -- we must weigh the evidence and allow the preponderance of evidence to produce the correct conclusions. These techniques are an integral part of *[studying] to show [ourselves] approved unto God, [workmen] that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (II Timothy 2:15).

Further, though men may try, it is impossible for them to totally remove fundamental truths from the Word of God, because the Scriptures were inspired by God, and *God's ways are not man's ways*. Therefore certain spiritual truths (that for one reason or another men might want to obscure or remove from the Bible) are not always recognizable to the unsaved. One reason for this is that many of them are hidden in shadows, types, allegories, parables, and prophetic

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

utterances. Another reason is that all spiritual truth is known only to the Spirit of God. Therefore, when the Spirit of God quickens the truth of the gospel to the believer, He then indwells the believer so that the believer may come to understand the things of God. This process provides for the spiritual growth of the believer through sound preaching, sound teaching, and the reading of sound spiritual material. This is a lifetime process, because God is infinite and man is finite. So growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should begin with salvation and continue until death.

We are an English-speaking people. Most of what we know has come to us through our ability to read and think in English. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the Scriptures were not written in English. They were written in Hebrew and Aramaic in the Masoretic text of the Old Testament Scriptures, and they were written in Greek in the Accepted Text of the New Testament Scriptures. Our Bible is a translation of these languages. We must not forget this. The pastor/teacher does not have to be an expert in Hebrew and Greek, but he certainly needs to have a working knowledge of these languages. This can be obtained with a working library. Such a library will enable the pastor/teacher to view the original languages, and to make the sort of judgments we were compelled to make with *homologeō* and *poieō*. Changes in the wording should not be done capriciously, but thoughtfully, prayerfully, and for the sake of the truth -- comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Even so, it should not seem strange that the translators of our Bible were biased by their doctrines, nor should it seem strange that this bias can be seen in the manner in which some passages were translated. In my personal studies over more than half a century, I have seen times

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

when the meaning of some words were changed, or verb tenses were changed to suit a particular doctrine; I have seen times when the choice of words by the translators were not the best choice for the context; I have seen times when some words (important to our understanding) were not translated at all; I have seen times when some words were transliterated, rather than translated, when a translation would have been helpful; I have seen the occasion in the book of Acts when the word for *Passover* was substituted with the word *Easter* (which, according to the Venerable Bede [672-723 A.D.] in *De Ratione Temporum*, was a popular springtime feast to the goddess Eostre [a. k. a. Eastre]. It was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church to celebrate the resurrection of Christ in lieu of celebrating the Jewish Feasts of Passover and Firstfruits); I have seen the occasion in the book of James when the word for *synagogue* was translated *assembly*, which better fit the translator's view of the book; and I have seen occasions throughout the Scriptures when the translator's choice of words almost always favored a legalistic view -- a view in complete agreement with Anglican doctrine, yet a view that is contrary to the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. We must also recognize that there were many different translators. Consequently, some passages of Scripture were translated very well, and other passages were translated without congruity, even to the point of suggesting that the translator of that portion of the Scriptures was void of spiritual understanding.

This in no way impugns our English Bible; it simply means that the teacher of the Word of God (no matter what Bible he uses) is required to study to show himself approved unto God. If the teacher of Biblical truth applies himself to *rightly dividing the word of truth*, then any misstatements or poor choices of words can be known and easily corrected. However, if the

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

teacher doggedly declares that God has preserved His Word in the King James Bible (as many in this age do); and if he refuses to recognize that God has preserved His Word in their original languages in which they were inspired of God (and from which the King James Bible was translated), then this teacher has placed himself and those he teaches at a distinct disadvantage. Perhaps the motivation for such a stand is a defense for the inerrancy of the Scriptures. If this is true, this is commendable, but attributing inerrancy to a translation is not. It is indefensible, as our studies have shown.

Our text states: *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God* If this statement is over simplified, it is possible for the reader to think that anyone who says he believes in Jesus is a child of God. We know from previous studies that this is not true. We know that there are false prophets, who come to us in sheep's clothing. We know they obviously claim to believe in Jesus, but their claim is a false claim. Thus the Greek word *pisteuo*, translated *believeth* in our text, needs further examination. Such an examination reveals that it comes from the same root word in the Greek language (*peitho*) that the word translated *faith* comes from. *Peitho* can mean *to be fully persuaded*. This can be seen in Paul's reference to Abraham's faith in the book of Romans, where he wrote of Abraham: *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness* (Romans 4:20-22, emphasis mine).

This expands our understanding of the word *faith*. Biblical faith is grounded in the truth of the Scriptures. So if we should replace the word *faith* with the word *persuasion* in Romans

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

10:17 (where the word *faith* is preceded by the definite article in the Greek text), this would enable us to understand that the persuasion concerning Jesus Christ (in His Person and in His work) *cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. This was initially done at the time of our salvation, when through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God regenerated our human spirit (which had died in Adam), and gave us enough spiritual understanding concerning Jesus Christ (in His Person and in His work) to believe and be saved. Subsequent to our salvation, our growth has also been dependent upon hearing the Word of God, *rightly divided*, so that the Spirit of God can give the *increase* in our understanding of the Person and the work of Christ. This means that *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ* is the equivalent of the agreement with God that was required by John's use of the Greek word *homologeō*. This agreement with God, as we have seen, has given us the distinction between *the Spirit of the truth* and *the spirit of the error*. When we put all of this together, this means that *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ* has been fully persuaded (by the Word of God and the Spirit of God) that Jesus is the Christ of a *rightly divided* Bible.

There are many things revealed about Jesus Christ throughout the Scriptures. We, as believers in Jesus Christ, had very little understanding of the Person and the work of Christ when we were first saved. The primary thing that we came to know was that we were sinners, and that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He arose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. Nevertheless, as we have grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, we have come to understand more and more. We have come to know that the Christ of the Bible is God (John 1:1; John 10:27-30; John 14:8-10); the Christ of the Bible is the Creator

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

(John 1:1-3); the Christ of the Bible is the Light of the world (John 8:12); the Christ of the Bible became a Man, by means of the virgin birth, so that He could be both God and Man, so that He could mediate between God and man (Matthew 1:18-25; I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25); the Christ of the Bible lived His life as a Jew under the law, and in His life as a Jew He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law, as well as all righteousness (Matthew 5:17-18); the Christ of the Bible freely offered Himself as a ransom for sin, dying the Just for the unjust (John 12:27; I Peter 3:18; I Timothy 2:5-6); the Christ of the Bible bore the curse of sin by being hanged upon a tree (Galatians 3:13); the Christ of the Bible is our Passover (I Corinthians 5:7), thus He was selected for sacrifice on the tenth day of the month of Abib, and He was examined until the fourteenth day of the month, and He was found to be without spot or blemish (Exodus 12:3-6); the Christ of the Bible was hanged on the cross at nine in the morning (Mark 15:25), and at three in the afternoon (Mark 15:34-37) He bowed His head and dismissed His Spirit (John 19:28-30) (Note: our references to time are according to Roman time [as in John's Gospel], whereas the times cited in our references in the Gospel of Mark are according to the Jewish reckoning of time, from sunset to sunset); the Christ of the Bible was placed in a nearby tomb, where after three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40), He showed Himself alive to His disciples, and He later showed Himself alive to above five hundred brethren at one time (I Corinthians 15:5-8); the Christ of the Bible made one sacrifice for sin forever, thus putting the new covenant into effect (Hebrews 10:12-18); the Christ of the Bible promised, *Because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:19); the Christ of the Bible has provided eternal life for His sheep (those who believe in Him), and they shall never perish (John 10: 28); the Christ of the Bible ascended from the Mount of Olives, forty days after His resurrection from the dead, with

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

the promise, . . . *this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11); the Christ of the Bible is now seated in heaven, at the right hand of the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us, thwarting every accusation against us by reference to His atoning blood (Hebrews 7:25; Revelation 12:10; I John 1:7); finally, the Christ of the Bible will return again to the Mount of Olives, to complete the redemption of the nation of Israel, and to establish His Kingdom upon this earth (Zechariah 12:7-10; 13:8-9; 14:4-9; Revelation 19:11-16). This is by no means a complete listing of the Person and the work of the Christ, but these are things that immediately come to mind.

Returning to our text, John wrote: *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.* This is a reiteration of truths we have already considered. Since *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*, we have been fully persuaded concerning the Person and the work of our Lord -- *that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.* Therefore, we love God because He first loved us. In keeping with this, we also love those who are our brethren in Christ, for John wrote: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 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 [the] 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* (I John 4:7-11). This means, as we have seen in previous studies, that the love that bonds

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

believers together was manifested in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Thus, John continued: *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* (I John 5:2-3). At first glance, the word *commandments* immediately brings to mind the ten commandments. The reason for this is the bias of the translator, because (according to Anglican doctrine) the translator believed in baptismal regeneration, confirmation, and that one could choose (after his salvation) to live according to the principles of the law. These concepts are false. The baptism that saves is not water baptism. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9), which takes place when the Spirit of God quickens the truth of the gospel to the heart of the individual, as he hears the gospel proclaimed (Acts 10:44-48). Therefore the parents of a child cannot assure the child's salvation by infant baptism, to be confirmed by the child when he reaches puberty. Further, no one can live according to the precepts of the law, not before or after salvation (Romans 3:20). So this last concept is a violation of Paul's experiences in the seventh chapter of Romans. It falls into the category of the Galatian heresy (Galatians 1:6-9), which Paul called *another gospel*.

As we have already seen, the Greek word translated *commandments* is the same word that is used to describe the ten commandments in the New Testament. However, since Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe, a better choice of words for *entole* in our text would have been, *words spoken*. This is true because *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth* (Romans 10:4). And: . . . *that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith[,] And the law is not of faith . . .*

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

(Galatians 3:11-12). *But without 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). Further, the apostle Paul taught: *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17). Lastly, John showed what he meant by the word, *entole*, when he wrote: *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him* (I John 2:4-5, emphasis mine).

Now that we know that it is the things spoken by God that we are to keep, we need to consider two more Greek words in our text. They are the words for *keep* and *grievous*. Keep is the Greek word *tereo*. It means *to watch over protectively*. The other word is *barus*. In its negative form, it means *not to be a burden*. So when we put it all together, the latter part of our text says: *For this is the love of God [manifested in the Person and the work of Christ], to protectively watch over His Word, and His Word is not burdensome* (I John 5:3, paraphrased). Indeed, throughout the lives of believers, it is our privilege to protectively watch over the truth of the Word of God, for the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ is not burdensome. It is our joy, and it is our hope.

So, continuing with our text, John wrote: *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?* (I John 5:5) Before considering the last part of our text, we need to return to a statement John made in the second chapter of his epistle. He wrote: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If*

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

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 (I John 2:15-16). To define the *world* in this text, we must return to the book of Genesis and the fall of Eve.

Adam and Eve were both advised by God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if they would do so, they would die both spiritually and physically. It was then that . . . *the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat* (Genesis 3:4-6).

Comparing the text in Genesis with the text in First John, it is quite evident that the *world* is defined by that which came from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Consequently, when Eve saw that the tree was good for food -- that was the lust of the flesh; when she saw that it was pleasant to the eyes -- that was the lust of the eyes; and when she saw that it was a tree to be desired to make one wise -- that was the pride of life. Then, John tells us that these *[are] not of the Father, but [are] of the world*.

Thus the world (*kosmos*) is the order of things in the inhabited world since the fall of Adam and Eve. It is the way that man has thought ever since he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, as we have seen many times before, it was described by Solomon when he wrote: *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*

Whosoever Believeth that Jesus Is the Christ

(Proverbs 14:12). The one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is the one who overcomes the world. He is freed from thinking according to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. This was accomplished at the moment that the individual believer recognized himself a sinner (through the preaching of the truth of the gospel), and believed that Jesus Christ died for his sins according to the Scriptures, was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Thus *overcoming* is not striving in the flesh. It is accomplished by faith, apart from the deeds of the law. Therefore we stand in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, and have no hope in works of righteousness which we have done. Faith in Christ will ultimately provide us with the victory over sin, death and the grave, for the Scripture says: *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* (I John 3:2-3).

Chapter XX

FOR THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR RECORD IN HEAVEN

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by [the] water only, but by [the] water and [the] blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is [the] truth. For there are three that bear record in [the] heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy [Spirit]: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness [on the] earth, the [S]pirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. (I John 5:6-8).

Before we delve into this portion of the Word of God, we need to be reminded that the Scriptures must be interpreted in the light of Who they reveal God to be, because *All scripture is given by inspiration of God* This means that God breathed out His Word to men chosen of God; this means that they wrote utilizing their writing styles, personalities, and personal experiences, but the words were God's. John attested to this fact in the second sentence of our text: *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is [the] truth.* Peter also gave testimony to the inspiration of the Scriptures: *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved [borne along] by the Holy [Spirit] (II Peter 1:21);* and the apostle Paul wrote: *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*

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Peter 3:16-17).

In addition to recognizing the inspiration of the Scriptures, our studies have revealed the many attributes of God; and we have observed that Jesus Christ fully satisfied all of the attributes of God related to the redemption of fallen man in His first advent ministry. We have also observed that the Scriptures cannot be understood by mere intellectual pursuit (no matter the level of the intellect), because the Scriptures say: *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (I Corinthians 1:18-21, emphasis mine).*

The apostle Paul also contrasted the differences between natural and spiritual wisdom in this same letter: *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes [both Roman and Jewish leaders] of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the*

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

*spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man [i.e., the unsaved man] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:7-14, emphasis mine). Further, the Scriptures tell us that our Lord *spake many things unto [the multitude] in parables* (Matthew 13:3). The disciples then asked: *Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given* (Matthew 13:11, emphasis mine).*

We have reminded our readers of these truths, because our text (like our Lord's parables) contains spiritual truths that can only be understood by believers. Even so, it is important for believers to understand that even though the Spirit of God came to indwell them at the moment of their salvation, the Spirit's presence within them (along with their regenerated spirits) does not automatically provide them with an understanding of the mysteries of God. Remember, Paul told the Corinthians: *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able* (I Corinthians 3:1-2). Additionally, Timothy (who labored with Paul as a young man) was admonished by Paul for the shame he exhibited towards the Lord and towards Paul. This occurred late in Paul's ministry, and it prompted him to write: *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and*

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

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 (II Timothy 1:8-9, emphasis mine). Later, in this same epistle, Paul provided Timothy with the solution for the shame he had felt: *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (II Timothy 2:15, emphasis mine).

Thus spiritual growth is dependent upon the degree of spiritual input that is available to the believer, because *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17). It is also conditioned upon the receptiveness of the believer. This can be seen in the different types of ground (where the seed grew) in our Lord's parable of the Sower. Further, Peter admonished the Jewish Christians to whom he wrote: *But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ . . .* (II Peter 3:18). A growth in the principles of grace is necessary for a proper understanding of the Word of God, because the believer's relationship with God is entirely a relationship of grace. However, it must be remembered, no matter how diligent the believer may be in his efforts to study and grow spiritually, there will never be a time in the life of the believer when he will have attained to a complete understanding of all of the Word of God, because God is Infinite and believers are finite. Consequently, whether we are babes in Christ or old gnarled veterans, the injunction to receive and study the Word of God is perpetual.

With these principles in mind, let us now approach our text in the fifth chapter of the epistle of John: *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by [the] water only, but by [the] water and [the] blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is [the] truth* (I John 5:6). The references to *water* and *blood* in this text declare (in mystery

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

form) the reason for our Lord's first advent ministry upon this earth.

This means that John's allusion to *water* is an allusion to the life our Lord came to provide, because in the natural world water is absolutely essential to life. Thus, the reference to *water* is parabolic. God illustrated this to Israel at Rephidim: *And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel (Exodus 17:1-6, emphasis mine).*

This historical incident reveals that the smiting of the rock (a type of Christ [I Corinthians 10:4]) was a portrayal of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, to provide eternal life to those who believe that He was smitten for their sins. Further, we know that Jesus Christ is the water of life that came down from heaven to provide life upon this earth, because (while speaking to the woman at the well) *Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst*

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (I John 4:13-14, emphasis mine).

Similarly, Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, and said: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the [wind], he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5, emphasis mine; also the substitution of *wind* for *Spirit* is mine, because *pneuma* can mean wind, spirit, breath, etc.).* Later, in His conversation with Nicodemus, our Lord said: *If I have told you earthly things [i.e., of water and wind], and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven [the Water of Life], even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:12-18).* Sometime after speaking to Nicodemus, the Scriptures say: *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this*

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet (John 7:37-40, emphasis mine). The association of our Lord with water in the foregoing Scriptures reveal very clearly, our Lord *came by water*.

Not only did our Lord come by *water*, He also came by *blood*. The significance of coming by blood can also be seen by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Since the Scriptures say, *God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth* (Acts 17:26); and since the Scriptures say: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement [covering] for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul* (Leviticus 17:11); and since the Scriptures say: *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission* (Hebrews 9:22); and since the Scriptures say: *The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man [Jesus Christ] is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly* (I Corinthians 15:47-49); and since the Scriptures say: *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us* (Matthew 1:23), these Scriptures should make it evident that God became a man, through the virgin birth, so He could be a Kinsman Redeemer to the human family: so that He could be the *one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (I Timothy 2:5). Thus these Scriptures provide testimony to the fact that our Lord came by *blood*, and they also testify to the truth that: . . . *it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is [the] truth*.

Continuing with the next portion of our text, John wrote: *For there are three that bear*

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

record in [the] heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy [Spirit]: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness [on the] earth, the [S]pirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one (I John 5:7-8). This portion of Scripture confounds many who profess to be Christians, including men as brilliant as Thomas Jefferson. In a letter to William Short, April 13, 1820, Jefferson wrote: *The Presbyterian clergy are loudest, the most intolerant of sects, the most tyrannical, and ambitious; ready at the word of the law giver, if such a word could now be obtained, to put the torch to the pile, and to rekindle in this virgin hemisphere the flames in which their oracle Calvin consumed the poor Servetus, because he could not find in his Euclid the proposition which has demonstrated that three are one, and one is three, nor subscribe to that of Calvin that magistrates have a right to exterminate all heretics to Calvinistic creed (Christianity and the Constitution, John Eidsmoe, Baker Book House, 1987, p. 237).*

It is interesting that Jefferson used Euclid, the father of geometry, to refute the concept that three are one, and one is three. Geometry is often concerned with triangles. A triangle has three sides, yet it is one triangle. Perhaps Jefferson might have seen the truth of the Trinity if it had been presented to him with the testimony of the Scriptures. Whether this was ever done or not, I have no personal knowledge. History simply reveals Jefferson's diatribe against the Presbyterians and Calvin. Calvin certainly had some things right, but his persecution of those who denied Calvinistic doctrine cannot be justified in this age of grace -- in this age of the New Covenant. Even so, Jefferson's sense of reason should have taught him that man himself is not just a body -- he is a dichotomy: a two-part being of body and soul. Further, redeemed man is a trichotomy -- a three-part being of body, soul and regenerated spirit. These parallels should have

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

enabled Jefferson to understand that God has the ability to express Himself in three Persons, but whether he ever made such a comparison is not known. The information that is available to us suggests that he did not.

It behooves us, then, to examine God's revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. This examination will provide additional testimony from the Spirit of God that *there are three that bear record in [the] heaven . . . and these three are one*. First, in John's Gospel, John bore witness to the fact that the Father and the Son are One: *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. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made* (John 1:1-3, emphasis mine). This Scripture declares that God and the Word are One, and that all things were made by the Word. If we allow that God and the Word are One, there is no contradiction, but if we do not, then we have a problem with the Scripture that says: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth* (Genesis 1:1). Second, John goes on to reveal that the Word is the incarnation of God in the Person of Jesus Christ, for he wrote: *He [the Word] came unto his own [nation], and his own [people] received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he [authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And 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 1:11-14, emphasis mine). Third, John declared that the Son is the physical manifestation of God when he wrote: *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him* (John 1:18, emphasis mine). Fourth,

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

John recorded the conversation between our Lord and the woman at the well: *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that [Messiah] cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he (John 4:21-26, emphasis mine).* Fifth, Jesus declared that He and the Father are One in His discourse on the good shepherd: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him* (John 10:27-31, emphasis mine). Sixth, in the upper room, prior to our Lord's arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial and resurrection: *Philip saith unto him, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake* (John 14:8-11, emphasis mine). Seventh, Jesus promised the disciples the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. In doing so, He showed them that after the giving

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

of the Holy Spirit they would be indwelt by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. 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. 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 14:16-23, emphasis mine). Eighth, the Old Testament Scriptures attested that God would dwell with man in the Person of the virgin born Son of God: *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel* (Isaiah 7:14). In Matthew's Gospel, we are reminded that Emmanuel means God with us (Matthew 1:23, emphasis mine). Further, the tabernacle in the wilderness was a portrayal of God dwelling with Israel (Exodus 25:8-9); and the sacrificial system was a portrayal of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Ninth, the names given to the promised Son of God in prophecy are the names of deity: *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,**

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6-7, emphasis mine). These Scriptures declare: *For there are three that bear record in [the] heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy [Spirit]: and these three are one* (I John 5:7, emphasis mine).

Nevertheless, man struggles with the concept of a Triune God. He does this despite the many references to the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the above named Scriptures; he does this despite the fact that one of the Hebrew names for God in the Old Testament Scriptures, *Elohim*, is plural. It was Elohim that created the heaven and the earth. It was Jehovah Elohim that warned Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Further, in the temptation of the woman, the plural name for God was again used: *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God [Jehovah Elohim] had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God [Elohim] said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God [Elohim] hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God [Elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [Elohim], knowing good and evil* (Genesis 3:1-5).

At the close of the above verses, the translator recognized that Elohim is plural. Prior to this, he had simply translated Elohim as *God*, but at the end of the serpent's statement, he translated Elohim as *gods*. It seems that the translator missed the point of the serpent's temptation

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

-- the serpent promised the woman that she would be like God (Elohim) if she would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, the serpent promised the woman that she would be like the Triune God. Further, the use of Elohim in these Scriptures proves that there is no contradiction when the Scriptures declare that God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1), that all things were made by the Word (John 1:3), or that the Spirit of God was active in creation (Psalm 33:6). Rather, there is a corroboration that *there are three that bear record in [the] heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy [Spirit]: and these three are one* (I John 5:7).

We have now come to the final portion of our text: *And there are three that bear witness [on the] earth, the [S]pirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one* (I John 5:8). Before our Lord ascended into heaven, after His crucifixion, burial and resurrection, He commissioned His church to go into all of the world and preach the gospel. Paul emphasized the gospel in his letter to the Corinthians: *Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that 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* (I Corinthians 15:1-6). The *three that bear witness [on the] earth* are all involved in the preaching of the gospel.

First, the gospel is how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Since the

For There Are Three that Bear Record in Heaven

Scriptures teach that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22), the blood factor of our text is contained in the gospel, and it was manifested by the spear thrust into our Lord's side (John 19:34). Second, the gospel declares that Christ gained the victory over death by his resurrection from the dead, and our Lord promised, *Because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:6). This involves the *water* of our text, because (as we have previously seen) without water there is no life on this earth. Third, Paul wrote: *I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase* (I Corinthians 3:6). In this capacity, our Lord said: *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life* (John 6:63). And the apostle Paul wrote: *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:4-7). Consequently, through the preaching of the gospel, *there are three that bear witness [on the] earth, the [S]pirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one* (I John 5:8).

Chapter XXI

THE WITNESS OF GOD IS GREATER

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. (I John 5:9-12).

In our studies thus far, we have seen the importance of viewing the Scriptures in the light of the attributes of God, because *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*. We have also seen that the many and varied spiritual truths contained in the Scriptures can only be understood by those who have trusted Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord, and are thus indwelt by His Holy Spirit. This is true, because *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Corinthians 2:14). We have also seen that spiritual understanding requires spiritual growth, and this growth can be compared to the growth of a child. So, by way of comparison, a natural child has certain latent traits which he has received from his parents, and a child born of the Spirit has certain gifts of the Spirit. Some of these may be evident shortly after birth, but all of them do not

The Witness of God is Greater

reach their full potential without growth and exercise. Consequently, the degree of growth and exercise will have a great deal to do with the end results. Thus, in the natural realm, a child may have the ear, the dexterity, and the musical aptitude to be a concert violinist, but those latent traits may never come to fruition without being developed and exercised. Even then, dependent upon the degree of development and exercise, the end results may vary from one end of the spectrum to the other -- to one who plays for his own enjoyment, to another who may become a virtuoso. Consequently, the developmental process for the believer is dependent upon his particular spiritual gifts, and the development of those gifts as the believer grows in grace and in the knowledge of His Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For those who are called of God to preach and to teach, all of the gifts of the Spirit required for this ministry are fueled by a diligent study of the Word of God -- *rightly divided* and applied.

This requires an attention to detail, but these details are not learned all at once. They are themselves a part of spiritual maturity. For example, when reading the Scriptures, it must be known who is speaking and to whom; the immediate context, as well as the overall context of the Scripture in question must be known; it must be known what covenant relationship was in effect in the Scripture under consideration; it must be known that about two-thirds of the Bible is covered by the covenant of the law; it must be known that the covenant of the law was a covenant of death, because no one was ever justified before God by the law; it must be known that the sacrificial system, which was a part of the old covenant, pointed the offenders of the law to faith in Christ; it must be known that the Lord Jesus Christ alone fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law, and then He abrogated the law after He was crucified, buried and resurrected from the dead; it must be

The Witness of God is Greater

known that the new covenant was put into effect with His sacrifice for the sins of the world, thus fulfilling God's promise to Abraham: that of his Seed all of the families of the earth would be blessed; it must be known that all believers of all ages are viewed in the New Testament under the new covenant (irrespective of the covenant they lived under), and this is clearly seen in the fourth chapter of Romans and the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. This latter detail provides the reason we do not find a single sin of an Old Testament saint recorded anywhere in the New Testament, because the new covenant promised: *their sins and iniquities will I remember no more* (Hebrews 10:17). These considerations are not all of the things that need to be known; but, if we are to rightly divide the Word of Truth, these principles (along with our consideration of the attributes of God) will certainly point us in the right direction.

Further, the grammatical structure of the Scriptures is a very important part of the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. Despite this, there were times in the translation of the King James version of the Bible when some of the translators seemed to ignore some of the grammatical structure of the Scriptures. It is impossible at this juncture to know their motivation for doing this, but it appears that Anglican doctrine was a factor. Some words were transliterated rather than translated and others had their meanings changed to support, for example, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration; verb tenses were sometimes changed, so that aorist verbs (which were punctiliar acts in time past) were translated in virtually every tense of the English language; the definite article was often ignored, so that in Romans 5:12 through Romans 8:3, the singular noun *sin* was accompanied by the definite article thirty times, but not one of those articles was translated. This neglect of the importance of the definite article has made it difficult, in some

The Witness of God is Greater

cases, to see certain spiritual truths contained in the Scriptures. It was by comparing our King James Bible with the Greek text that I discovered the thirty untranslated definite articles in Romans. By way of contrast, Paul only used this construction (*the sin*) three times in his twelve other epistles. This, by itself, indicates Paul's use of the definite article was not a writing style, or a quirk of the Greek language, but was used to specify a particular sin.

We know that in English the definite article before a singular noun refers to a specific person, place or thing. This is also true in the Greek language. However, it may not be known that the Greeks used the definite article far more extensively than it is used in English. Consequently, our Greek New Testament refers to *the God, the Jesus, the Peter, the Paul, the sin, etc.* While this emphasis upon the specific in the Greek language is correct, and must not be ignored (as *the sin* was in Romans), it can sometimes be awkward to translate literally into English, because we do not normally carry the designation of the specific that far. It appears then, that for the sake of style, the definite article was often left untranslated, even when there were many times when it should have been translated. Nevertheless, to illustrate the problem the translators faced, I have taken the liberty of inserting the definite articles that were not translated back into our text:

If we receive the witness of [the] men, the witness of [the] God is greater: for this is the witness of [the] God which he hath testified of [the Son of Him]. He that believeth on the Son of [the] God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not [the] God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that [the] God gave of [the Son of Him]. And this is the record, that [the] God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in [the Son of Him]. He that hath the Son hath [the] life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not [the] life. (I John 5:9-12, insertions mine, based upon the Greek text).

It is immediately evident that our modified text does not read as smoothly as the King

The Witness of God is Greater

James translation. Even so, we must ask, does the classic style of the King James translation always fairly represent the Greek from which it was translated? Our studies in the epistles of John have revealed that there were some instances in which the answer to our query would have to be, no. This does not impugn the value of the King James Bible, but it does show (no matter what translation of the Bible we use) that we are compelled to *Study to shew [ourselves] approved unto God* Further, an examination of our present text reveals that in some instances the removal of the article has changed the meaning of the text, and in other instances it has not. For example, in the case of God and the Son of God, the specificity of the articles was maintained by the capitalization of the words. However, in the case of *men* and *life*, the specificity of the definite articles was lost, because without them it is not immediately apparent that John wrote about a specific group of men and a specific kind of life.

So, with respect to *the men*, if we were to search the Greek text of the New Testament, we would find many references to them. These men, as the Scriptures have shown (in most instances), were *the men* in Israel that were regarded to be its religious authorities. It was they who had throughout the history of Israel interpreted the law so that it had lost its *schoolmaster* role. Consequently, before our Lord sent His disciples out to preach the gospel of the kingdom, He warned: *But beware of [the] men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues* (Matthew 10:17). From this text alone, we know that the testimony of *the men* was almost always linked to a Jewish traditional system of interpretation, and not directly to the truth of the Word of God. This can be seen in an encounter between our Lord and certain Pharisees and scribes:

The Witness of God is Greater

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath [Isaiah] prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of [the] men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye (Mark 7:1-13, emphasis mine).

This incident with the scribes and Pharisees is directly related to our text, because our text establishes the greater authority of the testimony of God (i. e., the Word of God) to the testimony of *the men* (i. e., the traditions of the elders). Even so, the Jews railed on our Lord because His disciples failed to follow one of their traditions. One might get the idea that washing before eating was a practical matter of hygiene. This was not its purpose. It was a ritual washing (begun by *the men*) for the sole purpose of displaying one's religious devotion.

Religious traditions are sometimes associated with the truth; nevertheless, the tradition itself can distort the truth. For example, under the canopy of Christianity, three traditions associated with the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord are observed. They are *Easter Sunday*, *Good Friday*, and *Palm Sunday*. The word *Easter* is found once in our King James Bible (Acts 12:4). However the word that is translated *Easter* should have been translated *unleavened*

The Witness of God is Greater

bread, or (by implication) it could have been translated *Passover*, because the first day of the feast of unleavened bread was the Passover.

The circumstances that brought it into our Bible are interesting. *Easter* was a popular pagan feast to the goddess of spring (or fertility). The Anglo-Saxons called her Ostara, which was a derivative of the ancient word for spring: *eastre*. (*De Ratione Temporum*, written by the Venerable Bede, a Christian scholar, 672-735 AD.) When the Roman Catholic church was doing missionary work amongst the Anglo-Saxons, this feast was so popular that they adopted the name *Easter* to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Thus, a pagan feast was assimilated into Christianity, and the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord has been called *Easter* ever since. Further, the close proximity of our Lord's resurrection to Easter (at the time of the vernal equinox) made this assimilation easy. Later, when King Henry VIII separated from the Roman Catholic Church, he formed the Anglican Church. Since he had formerly been Catholic, and had been given the title *Defender of the Faith* by the Pope; and since England had also been Catholic, many Catholic traditions were assimilated into the Church of England, and those which did not fit King Henry's purpose were rejected. It was quite natural, then, for the translator to substitute the word *Easter* for the Greek word *adzumos* (unleavened bread), which is the word for which it stands in Acts 12:4.

Palm Sunday and *Good Friday* are also observed during *Easter* week. This is done despite the fact that Christ could not possibly have been crucified on Friday, and also make His entry into Jerusalem (*on the foal of an ass*) on the previous Sunday. This becomes quite evident when we compare Scripture with Scripture, if we are not swayed by traditional bias.

Prior to His crucifixion our Lord had a conversation with some apostate Jews. They

The Witness of God is Greater

desired to see Him perform miracles, for the sake of viewing miracles. So, He said to them: *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet [Jonah]: for as [Jonah] was three days and three nights in the . . . belly [of the great fish]; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth* (Matthew 12:39-40, emphasis mine).

This is a very important portion of Scripture. It provides for the resurrection of our Lord from the dead after three days and three nights in the grave. It was/is a primary sign to Israel, and it provides an important aspect of the truth of the gospel: . . . *how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures* (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Even so (in consideration of the sign), no matter how one counts the days and the nights, it is not possible to count three days and three nights between Friday afternoon (shortly before sunset) to Sunday morning (*while it was yet dark*). Further, using the Jewish system of counting days (from sunset to sunset), and using the partial day theory of Dr. A. T. Robertson, only three days and two nights can be counted during this period of time, and each of two of those days could have been no more than a few minutes. Even so, Dr. Robertson claimed that the Jews counted any part of a day as a whole day (*Harmony of the Gospels*, A. T. Robertson, Harper & Brothers, 1922, 1950, pg. 290). This partial day theory (in this context) must be rejected, because even with it, it does not satisfy the conditions of our Lord's sign.

Further, it has been assumed (because the Sabbath was about to begin) that Christ was crucified on Friday. However, this shows a woeful ignorance of the Scriptures, because every Passover was observed as a Sabbath by the Jews, no matter what day of the week it fell on

The Witness of God is Greater

(Leviticus 23:6-8). In this regard, John has given us two very important references to time in his Gospel. These references, when considered in context with other Scripture, prove that Christ was not crucified on Friday, and that He did not make His entry into Jerusalem on Sunday, because they establish a very important time line: *Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead* (John 12:1).

In the above references to the Passover (which was also the first day of Unleavened Bread), an examination of pertinent Scripture reveals that the Passover was observed on the 15th day of the month of Abib (Leviticus 23:6), and the lamb was slain in the evening of the 14th (Exodus 12:6); and since the Jewish day began and ended at sunset, if Christ were crucified on Friday, that Friday would have been the 14th, Thursday would have been the 13th, Wednesday would have been the 12th, Tuesday would have been the 11th, Monday would have been the 10th, and Sunday would have been the 9th day of Abib, *six days before Passover*. Now, if we continue reading in John's Gospel, John tells us: *On the next day [the 10th of Abib] much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt* (John 12:12-15). This means that a *Good Friday* crucifixion would have necessitated a *Palm Monday*, not a *Palm Sunday* entry into Jerusalem.

Some thirty-eight years ago, I was called upon to teach a Tuesday morning men's Bible class by the associate pastor of a large church. He normally taught the class, but other duties had

The Witness of God is Greater

called him away. The class was a New Testament Survey, and the subject that day was the final week in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. I taught the class that our Lord left Ephraim (John 11:54) and came to Jericho (Mark 10:46), and from Jericho he arrived at Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12:1; Mark 11:1). The next day, the tenth of Abib (John 12:12-15; Mark 11:2-11), He entered Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass. I showed the class how that tradition had made our Lord a liar, because there are not three days and three nights between Friday afternoon and Sunday at dawn. Further, I showed them that a Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem would have made our Lord a Sabbath breaker, because He had traveled from Jericho to Bethany on the previous day. I carefully provided all of the Scriptural proofs for the premises I put forth. Interestingly, while I was teaching the lesson, no one questioned a single thing that I taught, but apparently some of the men were quite upset. If any of them had questioned anything I was teaching at that time, it would have been very easy to answer their questions, but they remained silent.

Nevertheless, when the associate pastor returned, apparently some of them spoke to him, and he questioned me about what I had taught. So, I carefully out-lined the whole final week of our Lord's life. I showed him how completely our Lord had fulfilled every aspect of Paul's statement, *Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us*. It was then that this associate pastor said to me, *A lot of good and great men would not agree with you*. I was dumbfounded. I wasn't asking *good and great men to agree* with me, I was asking a presumed Christian brother to agree with the testimony of Scripture. The evidence for what I had taught is overwhelming. In my lesson to that men's Bible study, and in my testimony to the associate pastor, I had proved that the

The Witness of God is Greater

traditions of men have contradicted the clear testimony of the Word of God; because there are not three days and three nights between Friday (at virtually sundown) and Sunday at dawn; and (as we have seen) a Friday crucifixion would have required a Monday entry into Jerusalem.

Is not the testimony of God greater than the testimony of *good and great men*? I might add, who are these good and great men? Does not the Scripture say: *For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not* (Ecclesiastes 7:20). Did not Paul question the Roman Christians, after establishing the guilt of unsaved Jews and unsaved Gentiles: *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God* (Romans 3:9-11). Are we not saved by grace? And is not grace unmerited favor? When has the testimony of *good and great men* had greater authority than the testimony of God? The Scriptures are very clear, the testimony of God is always greater.

It is interesting to note: the statement of that associate pastor was the statement of an individual who had been seminary trained in an interdenominational school. I happened to attend the same school for one semester after I was discharged from the U. S. Air Force in 1955. I quickly decided, these people do not take a stand for anything. If I were to stay there, I would either be in a fight continuously, or I would have to compromise much of the truth of the Word of God. So, I transferred to a Baptist Seminary. As things worked out, I ended up attending three schools before earning my degree in theology. It is much easier from my present perspective (fifty-two years in the ministry and eighty years of age) to evaluate the schools I attended. They

The Witness of God is Greater

each had their unique set of problems, and these varied from compromising the Word of God, to extreme self-righteousness, to thinking that they alone were God's gift to the world. Despite this, I learned a great deal from each of them. Education is both positive and negative. You can either learn how to do something, or how not to do it. Even so, the authority with which we have presented our case did not come from man, it came from the Word of God, rightly divided, according to Paul's instruction to Timothy: *Study to shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (II Timothy 2:15, emphasis mine).

Conditions in many churches were on the downward swing, doctrinally speaking, when I was ordained to the ministry in the summer of 1960. Today, I believe we are in the midst of the great apostasy that must precede the coming of our Lord (II Thessalonians 2:1-3). I also believe that Bible Colleges and Seminaries bear some of the responsibility, because they have adopted the educational practices of the world. This has been done to gain accreditation from the states where they reside, and accreditation is necessary to qualify them to educate students under state or federal programs. Consequently, when writing term papers, essays and theses, students are taught to document their writings. In general, there is absolutely nothing wrong with this; but, as practiced, it has one major flaw: in the schools I attended, we were not allowed to establish a premise based solely upon the Scriptures; all premises had to be documented with the authority of men, with an accompanying bibliography. This practice (whether intentional or not) places the authority of men above the authority of God; and this is a direct denial of our text: *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.*

The Witness of God is Greater

Now that we have seen who *the men* were, we must consider what John meant by *the life*. Our text supplies the answer: *If we receive the witness of [the] 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 [the] life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not [the] life* (I John 5:9-12, emphasis mine).

In the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, our Lord said: *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one* (John 10:27-30, emphasis mine). This is the promise of eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, in his Gospel, John recorded the words of our Lord; and in his epistle John confirmed the words of our Lord: *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.* Thus, *the life* in our text is eternal life. The witness that the believer has eternal life is the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, because our Lord promised His disciples: *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of [the] truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you* (John 14:16-17). Thus, with regards to the

The Witness of God is Greater

indwelling Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul wrote: *But ye are not in the flesh* [operating on the basis of law], *but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.* *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* (Romans 8:9).

Despite the statement of that associate pastor so many years ago, the criterion for the truth is not agreement with *the men*, it is agreement with God. Further, the majority of the churches under the canopy of Christianity do not believe in the security of the believer. Virtually all of them involve the works of man in his relationship with God, so that if he does not perform to a prescribed standard, he will lose his salvation. How can anyone have eternal life if that life is not eternal? Further, how can the Spirit of God be promised to indwell the believer forever, if the believer could lose his eternal life? Since *A lot of good and great men would not agree with [me]*, do any of us have eternal life?

Our text settles the issue: *If we receive the witness of [the] 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 had 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 [the] life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not [the] life.* (I John 5:9-12, emphasis mine).

Chapter XXII

THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT YE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

If we receive the witness of [the] 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. 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. 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 (I John 5:9-15).

In our previous chapter we considered some rules of interpretation while we considered the first four verses of the above text. This encouraged us to compare the testimony of religious authorities (*the men*) with the testimony of God; and while the Greek grammar of our text suggests that we do accept the testimony of these authorities, John has shown us that the testimony of God is always greater. This is axiomatic. God is infinite, and man is finite. God is Omniscient, and man's knowledge is limited. Therefore, from the time of his birth till the time of his death, everything that a man may come to know has come to him progressively. It matters not whether the subject is in the natural or spiritual realm, except that in the spiritual realm *the natural man*

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14). Even though the natural man cannot understand the things of God, the believer in Christ has the capacity to understand, because he has been given the Holy Spirit to indwell him. Capacity to understand and understanding are two different things. Peter wrote: *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen* (II Peter 3:18). Thus our capacity for spiritual understanding is dependent upon spiritual growth; and spiritual growth is dependent upon the degree of exposure each believer has with the truth of the Word of God, faithfully read, faithfully proclaimed, and rightly divided.

In this regard, Paul wrote to Timothy: *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also* (II Timothy 2:1-2). These instructions have set the standard among believers for teaching subsequent generations. Even so, there are some truths that were not unveiled to the general understanding of the church in the past. These truths require more light in order for us to be able to understand them. Sometimes God provides those of us who teach the Word of God with this light while we diligently study the Scriptures, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and other times this light is supplied by an historical event.

For example, prior to Israel's restoration as a nation among the nations again in 1948, the *dry bones* prophecy in the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel was considered by many theologians to be a description of a separate resurrection of the Jews from the dead. It was evident after Israel

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

was reestablished as a nation among the nations that the *dry bones* prophecy was fulfilled by that event, but only partially. Ezekiel's prophecy also promised that the Spirit of God would indwell these resurrected Jews (Ezekiel 37:14). This aspect of the prophecy has not yet been fulfilled, and will not be fulfilled for the Jews as a nation until they look on Him Whom they pierced (Zechariah 12:10). This will occur at the second coming of our Lord to the Mount of Olives, because Paul wrote: *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins* (Romans 11:25-27).

With these facts in mind, and looking back to Israel's restoration as a nation in 1948, we have been given sufficient information to be able to understand a rather obscure prophecy in the book of Hosea. It stated: *Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten [with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.], and he will bind us up. After [Achar: toward the hinder part of] two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight* (Hosea 6:1-2). Peter has provided us with an important key to the understanding of this prophecy: *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (II Peter 3:8, emphasis mine). If we apply Peter's formula to Hosea's text, we find that there were 1.878 days between the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the reconstitution of Israel as a nation in 1948. Further, the third day of Hosea's prophecy awaits fulfillment at the second coming of our Lord

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

to this earth. At that day (as noted above), Israel will look on Him Whom she pierced. She will then believe on the One Whom she rejected at His first advent upon this earth; and, as prophesied, Israel will be saved, and this will commence the third day of Hosea's prophecy -- the first one thousand years of our Lord's reign.

Continuing with our text, John wrote: *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* This seems to be a declaration of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God within believers; because Paul has taught us that it is the Spirit of God Who bears witness (testimony) with our spirit that we are His (Romans 8:16). The night before our Lord was crucified, He told His disciples: *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you* (John 14:16-20), emphasis mine). In this same vein, the apostle Paul wrote: *So then they that are in the flesh [contextually: trying to please God by the works of the law] cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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 8:8-11, emphasis mine). Paul also wrote: *O foolish Galatians, who hath*

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh (Galatians 3: 1-3, emphasis mine)?

This portion of Scripture makes it clear that the indwelling Holy Spirit in believers was obtained by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law. It also teaches us that Paul equated the works of the law with the flesh. This is not commonly understood; but it is of extreme importance if we are to understand our Lord's promise of eternal life to those who are redeemed. Our Lord promised that believers would be indwelt by His Holy Spirit, and that His Spirit would never leave them nor forsake them. There can be no greater assurance of eternal salvation than that. Further, Paul revealed that if any man is without the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, he does not belong to the Lord. Paul also revealed that the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead will also raise our mortal bodies from the dead. So, with regard to the Old Testament saints with whom the Holy Spirit dwelt, but did not indwell, the Lord perfected them by their baptism with the Holy Spirit. This occurred after the glorification of our Lord when He led the souls of the Old Testament saints out of *captivity captive* (Ephesians 4:8). At that moment in time (by the judicial reckoning of the Holy Spirit), the Old Testament saints were co-crucified, co-buried, and co-resurrected from the dead with the Lord, and were given the same position before the Lord as the New Testament saints (Colossians 3:3-4). Consequently, these believers are seen in the book of Hebrews as *the spirits of just men made perfect* (Hebrews 12:23).

This brings the Old Covenant and the New Covenant into perfect alignment; because the

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

promises of the Old Covenant (with the law and the shadows and types of the sacrificial system) were fulfilled when our Lord put the New Covenant into effect by fulfilling every jot and tittle of the law, fulfilling all righteousness, and then offering Himself as a ransom for sin. Thus He did what no other man could possibly do. In this regard, Paul wrote: *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our school master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.* For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized [by the Holy Spirit] into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond or free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:21-29, emphasis mine). Further, John has told us: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (I John 1:8). He has also told us: *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* (I John 3:2).

With these things in mind, and recognizing that the theme of our book is *Walking in the Truth*; and recognizing that the majority of churches under the canopy of Christianity do not believe in the eternal security of the believer, but believe that one must maintain his salvation by

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

the life that he lives, John's next statements are of extreme importance in the light of God's Omniscience and Immutability: *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. 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* (I John 5:10-13, emphasis mine).

It is interesting to note in this text, the words *witness*, *record* and *testified* all come from the same root word in the Greek language. This means that any one of these words could have been used for any other of these words in this text. Personally, I prefer the use of the word *testimony* above the other two. This means that our text could properly read: *If we receive the [testimony] of [the] men, the [testimony] of God is greater: for this is the [testimony] of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the [testimony] in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the [testimony] that God gave of his Son. And this is the [testimony], 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. 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* (I John 5:9-13).

To my mind, the use of the word *testimony* in lieu of *record*, and *witness* in this text emphasizes that John appealed to his audience as a panel of jurists. A jury is assembled to weigh

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

the evidence put forth in the case before it. This is our position with respect to the testimony of (the) men and the testimony of God. We are to weigh the testimony of both, and if they do not agree, John has shown us that the testimony of God is always greater. This should be self-evident, but throughout the church age the testimony of unredeemed authorities has supplanted the testimony of God with traditional practices and perceptions, so that men have succumbed to the lie of the devil -- that man can be like God by his knowledge of good and evil.

This is the primary reason that the major denominations under the canopy of Christianity have denied the security of the believer. They have placed the believer's security in his own conduct and not in the *one sacrifice for sin forever* made by our Lord. This is due to mixing the Old Covenant of the law and the sacrificial system with the New Covenant, because unregenerate authorities have not known what to do with sins committed by a believer after his salvation. Even so, our text is very clear: *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. 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* (I John 5:11-13, emphasis mine). This final statement should cause us to realize: if our salvation is in anywise dependent upon our own efforts (at any point in time), it would be impossible for us to know that we have eternal life; and for those who have not yet believed, these things were written so that they might also believe.

After providing the believer with the absolute assurance of eternal life, John closed this paragraph with another wonderful promise: *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that,*

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

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 (I John 5:14-15).

The word translated *confidence* in this text is the Greek word *parresia*. It means *freedom in speaking, boldness of speech*. This word was used thirty-one times in the New Testament, and it was variously translated: *boldness, confidence, openly, plainly, plainness of speech, boldness of speech, boldly and bold*. The writer to the Hebrews used it to describe the believer's approach to the throne of grace. In our text the basis for this boldness is an understanding of the Word of God, because John wrote: *if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us*. This must be contrasted with the prayers of the unsaved Jews of the diaspora in the book of James: *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts (James 4:3)*. There certainly are times when we pray when we do not have a clear statement from the Word of God to tell us how we should pray. In these instances our Lord has given us the way we should pray: *Nevertheless not my will but thine be done*. Further, the apostle Peter also helped us in this area when he wrote to the elders in the church at Rome: *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty*

That Ye May Know that Ye Have Eternal Life

hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen
(I Peter 5:1-11, emphasis mine).

Chapter XXIII

COMMUNION WITH DEATH

If any man see his brother [sinning] a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life 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. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and [the] wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in [the] wicked one]. 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. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen (I John 5:16-21).

This portion of Scripture immediately raises two questions: what is sinning unto death, and what is sinning not unto death? Lest we allow our minds to run amok with suppositions about these questions, it is important to realize that the commands for death for violations of the law were abrogated with the institution of the new covenant (Romans 10:4): *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). The portion of Scripture we are dealing with is clearly under the new covenant;

Communion with Death

because it was written by John after the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of our Lord from the dead. So, with respect to *a sin unto death* (as translated), the only source of authority for death that immediately comes to mind (in consideration of the fact that we are not under the old covenant, but the new) is Adam's sin. Death was the promised consequence of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: *And the LORD God commanded the man [Adam], saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof [dying, thou shalt die]* (Genesis 2:16-17).

We know that these consequences were passed to Adam's race by right of his federal headship (I Corinthians 15:21); so that man is spiritually dead until regenerated (Ephesians 2:4-5), and man also has an appointment with the death of his body (Hebrews 9:27). Spiritual death is conquered by faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This occurs when the Spirit of God quickens the Word of God to the mind of the lost individual, so that he believes the gospel and is saved (Ephesians 2:2-9). Physical death was conquered by our Lord's crucifixion, burial and resurrection from the dead (I Corinthians 15:1-4 and 55-57). This victory will not be fully realized by believers until *the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words* (I Thessalonians 4:16-18). We must not forget that our Lord promised: *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also* (John 14:19).

The apostle Paul seems to have provided us with additional information about sinning and

Communion with Death

death in the book of Romans, because (as translated) He wrote: *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans 6:23). This verse seems to suggest that death is the consequence of sinning, as does our text. Nevertheless a closer examination proves that this is not true, because the translator of this portion of Scripture failed to translate the definite article used with the singular noun *sin*. If he had translated it, it would have been evident that this text is not about the consequence of sinning; it is about the consequence of the sin of Adam.

Paul again made reference to death in the eighth chapter of Romans. He wrote: *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live* (Romans 8:12-13). If we compare this text with Galatians chapter three, it is evident that Paul equated the works of the law with the flesh; because he wrote: *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh* (Galatians 3:2-3, emphasis mine)? Since the Spirit was not received by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith, this means that *the flesh* in the Romans' text falls under the category of an abrogated law. Even so, despite its cancellation, the law continues to slay all who seek to be justified by it, because the law is a *ministration of death, written and engraven in stones* (II Corinthians 3:7).

These comparisons provide the explanation for Paul's experiences in the seventh chapter of Romans, where shortly after his salvation Paul described his post salvation experience with the law: *For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, [the] sin revived,*

Communion with Death

*and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For [the] sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But [the] sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that [the] sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under [the] sin (Romans 7:9-14). Thus Paul's experience of placing himself under the law after his salvation resulted in his total frustration: *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do* (Romans 7:19, emphasis mine).*

Since that event probably took place before Paul spent three years with the Lord in Arabia, he would not have yet learned of his judicial position in Christ; but after spending three years with the Lord, he understood very clearly that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth* (Romans 10:4). Therefore he understood: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh [i.e., the law], 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 [did] 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 [i.e., the law], but after the Spirit* (Romans 8:1-5).

There is one more incident recorded in the New Testament (after the abrogation of the law) that resulted in the deaths of two offenders (Ananias and Sapphira). When Barnabas sold his

Communion with Death

possessions to aid in the support of the church at Jerusalem, Ananias and Sapphira also sold their property. They announced that the proceeds from the sale would be given to the church. They did this for the attention it would draw to them, but their greed would not allow them to do as they promised: *Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy [Spirit], and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things (Acts 5:1-11, emphasis mine).*

The lie of Ananias and Sapphira to the church constituted a lie to the Holy Spirit, and it produced their deaths. The fact that Luke is the only New Testament writer to record their sin seems to imply that their sin was not the *sin unto death* of our text. This leaves us wondering what *sinning a sin unto death* could possibly be? The answer to this question lies in the Greek grammar of our text, and the meaning of the Greek word *pros*: translated *unto* in our text. *Pros*

Communion with Death

can be used in the sense of *communion* when it is used with a word in the accusative, which is the objective case in English (*Greek-English Lexicon*, Seventh Edition, Liddel and Scott, Oxford University Press, 1961, pg. 684, Section C, item 5). We have a clear example of this in the first two verses of John's Gospel, where *pros* is used twice: *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, emphasis mine). In this text both words that we have underlined are the word *pros*. *Pros* is used with *God*, and *God* is in the objective case in both statements. This means that in this context *pros* carries the idea of *communion*. Since the text tells us that the Word is God, and the Word was with God (in the sense of communing with God), we know (by considering other Scriptures that reflect the attributes of God) that all of the members of the Godhead have been in complete and perfect communion with themselves in God's *determinate counsel* and *foreknowledge* (Acts 2:23).

This should not seem strange, because (as individual members of the human family) we also commune with ourselves. We talk with ourselves, we reason with ourselves, and while we are doing these things, we are in communion with ourselves. It is from this kind of communion that much of the great literature, poetry and inventions of this world have come, as well as the schemes of evil men. My body, which is an integral part of who I am, does not think. It is my soul which uses my brain to think in the natural realm, and my regenerated spirit to use my brain to think in the spiritual realm. In this regard, the apostle Paul wrote: *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (I Corinthians 2:14). Further, some bodily functions are without conscious thought (as long as the body has life), but remove my soul and spirit from

Communion with Death

my body, and my body will cease to function in any capacity.

Continuing with our thoughts on the Greek word *pros*, it is used three times in I John 5:16 with the objective case: *If any man see his brother [sinning] a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.* The underlined words in this text are the word *pros*. Therefore, applying what we have previously learned, our text could properly read: *If any man see his brother [sinning] a sin which is not [in communion with] death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not [in communion with] death. There is a sin [of communing with] death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

Since the serpent's lie to the woman promised her life instead of death for eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and since all of the false religious systems of this world have since derived from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and since our Lord warned: *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit* (Matthew 12:33); and since Solomon wrote: *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12), *communings with death* is that practice of rejecting the grace of God in Jesus Christ for the concept that man can make himself like God by his morality -- his knowledge of good and evil.

Therefore when a professing believer seeks to establish his righteousness before God by the life that he lives, rather than solely by faith in the Person and the work of Jesus Christ, he is in danger of communing with death. Our Lord made reference to this in His sermon on the mount when He told the Jews: *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but*

Communion with Death

inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 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 [demons]? and in thy name done many [miraculous] works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work [the] iniquity (Matthew 7:15-23, emphasis mine).

These workers of *the iniquity* were/are counterfeit believers. They, like Judas, will have fooled many into believing that they were/are faithful servants of the Lord. In this regard, if you will recall our studies in the third chapter of First John, you will remember that we learned that in the Greek text John actually wrote: *for the sin is the iniquity*. We also learned that the word translated *iniquity* is a word that refers to a singular lawlessness, and we learned that it was Adam's sin which produced that lawlessness. Therefore, after God revealed (through the promise of the seed of the woman) salvation in Jesus Christ, looking to those things which derived from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a source of life is *communing with death* -- it is working *the iniquity*. We have seen it in Cain, and we have also seen it in the Judaizers who came to the churches of Galatia, as well as in many others. Paul invoked the anathema of God upon them (Galatians 1:7), because they corrupted the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ by

Communion with Death

adding the necessity of ritual and law to the doctrine of salvation.

At this juncture, lest we be accused of preaching grace that sin might abound, doing the right things is always proper, but it must be understood that believers were not made a new creation in Christ Jesus by doing the right things. They were made a new creation in Christ by the preaching of the Word of God, and the quickening power of the Spirit of God. Thus, having believed the gospel, Christ's righteousness was imputed unto them (II Corinthians 5:21). In Romans 3:9 Paul established the truth that no believer is in any wise better than the unsaved Jews and Gentiles of this world. This principle is very simple: *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 [Spirit]; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3:3-7).

Continuing with our text, John wrote: *If any man see his brother [sinning] a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.* This text seems to imply that life can be obtained by the prayers of believers, but this has not consistently been our experience as believers. We have prayed for family and friends, and not all of them have been saved. Therefore our text requires an analysis. First, it is important to recognize that the individual who is sinning in our text is not an unbeliever. He is a brother in Christ. Second, the sin that he is sinning is not the sin of *communing with death*. It could not be, because our Lord

Communion with Death

taught that a good tree cannot bear the fruit of the evil tree. Third, the word *ask* in our text is a word that can also mean *claim*. Therefore one brother, observing another brother sinning a sin which does not involve communing with death, can claim life for that brother: because *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin* (I John 1:7). He can be fully assured that he has life, because he is a true believer in Christ. Fourth, with regard to the individual who is sinning by communing with death, John wrote: *There is a sin [of communing with] death: I do not say that he shall pray for it*. In other words, no claim of life can be made for one who is communing with death, because he is looking for life in that which produced death -- the serpent's promise of life in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

With these truths in mind, John continued by stating: *All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and [the] wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in [the wicked one]. 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. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen* (I John 5:18-21, insertions are base upon the Greek text).

At this point in John's epistle, it is important to put certain truths that we have learned together. First, at the beginning of his epistle, John told the church to whom he wrote: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (I John 1:8). Second, in our present text John stated: *All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death*. Third, John stated: *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth*

Communion with Death

himself, and [the] wicked one toucheth him not. The conclusion that must be drawn contextually from these three portions of John's epistle (minus the last independent clause) is that there is unrighteousness in all believers, but the unrighteousness that is in believers does not involve communing with death -- the fruit of the evil tree -- that man can be like God by his knowledge of good and evil. The fact is: all of the sins that a believer will ever commit have been covered by the blood of Christ, because John has already written: *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin* (I John 1:7b). This means that the sin question has been settled for the believer in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the last independent clause in our text: *but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and [the] wicked one toucheth him not.* There is a shift in the subject in this portion of our text, but it is not seen because the past tense form of the verb *begotten* was translated in the present tense. If we correct the entire compound sentence of this portion of our text to make it agree with the Greek text, it would read: *We know that whosoever [has been] born of God sinneth not; but [He that was] begotten of God keepeth himself, and [the] wicked one toucheth him not* (I John 5:18). It becomes obvious with these changes (and previous studies) that the first clause is about believers not being able to commune with death, but the second clause is about the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16), the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He Who cannot be touched by the wicked one.

Even so, without this clarification, one might get the idea that a believer in Jesus Christ cannot be touched by the devil; yet Paul admonished the Ephesians: *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh*

Communion with Death

and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Ephesians 6:11-13).

Our text goes on to say: *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in [the wicked one]. 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. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen* (I John 5:19-21). With these words, John contrasted the position of the believer with the position of the unsaved of this world.

First, he assured his audience that the Lord Jesus Christ came to perform His redemptive ministry so that believers are secure in Christ, but the remainder of the world lies under the power of the wicked one. Second, for those of his audience whose faith was in Christ, John assured them that the Lord had given them *an understanding*, which was a reference to the indwelling Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:12). Third, because of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God, John told his audience: *and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ*. Fourth, the position of the believer is absolute because Jesus Christ is the true God, and in Him believers have eternal life. Therefore all of the claims of the counterfeit believers (requiring ritual and law for salvation) were negated by John's exposition of the position of the believer in Christ. John then closed his epistle with some very sound advice: *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*. The reason for this statement is that the church is the custodian of the truth. No believer can lose

Communion with Death

his salvation, but the assembly of believers (called the church) must keep *Walking in the Truth* for the sake of future generations; because God has chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (Romans 10:17).

So with this in mind, we should heed Paul's admonition to the Galatians: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage* (Galatians 5:1); we should also heed Paul's admonition to Timothy: *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry* (II Timothy 4:1-5). Both of these admonitions, if heeded, will greatly aid our walk in the truth.