

# THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN



An Explanation of This Letter  
Especially for You

Ger de Koning

ROCK  
SOLID  
11



# **The First Letter of John**



# The First Letter of John

An Explanation of This Letter  
Especially for You

Rock Solid #11 (Part I)

Ger de Koning

The original Dutch version is available at

Webshop: [www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl](http://www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl)

Orders: [info@uitgeverijdaniel.nl](mailto:info@uitgeverijdaniel.nl)

Cover design: Jan Paul Spoor

Layout: Jan Noordhoek

© 2016 by Ger de Koning. All rights preserved.

No part of this publication may be – other than for personal use – reproduced in any form without written permission of the author.

New American Standard Bible Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation La Habra, Calif. All rights reserved. For Permission to Quote Information visit <http://www.lockman.org>.

# Contents

<b>Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible</b>	<b>7</b>
Old Testament	7
New Testament	8
<b>Explanation of general format</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The First Letter of John</b>	<b>10</b>
Introduction	10
<b>1 John 1</b>	<b>12</b>
1Jn 1:1-2   The Word of Life	12
1Jn 1:3-6   Fellowship and Complete Joy	15
1Jn 1:7-10   To Walk In the Light and Cleansing	20
<b>1 John 2</b>	<b>23</b>
1Jn 2:1-2   Advocate and Propitiation	23
1Jn 2:3-11   Obedience and Love	26
1Jn 2:12-17   Fathers, Young Men, Children	31
1Jn 2:18-24   Characteristics of the Last Hour	36
1Jn 2:25-29   Anointing and Abiding In Him	41
<b>1 John 3</b>	<b>44</b>
1Jn 3:1-3   Children of God	44
1Jn 3:4-12   Practice Righteousness and Brotherly Love	46
1Jn 3:13-18   The Practice of Love	51
1Jn 3:19-24   Confidence Before God	55
<b>1 John 4</b>	<b>60</b>
1Jn 4:1-6   God's Spirit and the Spirit of the Antichrist	60
1Jn 4:7-14   God Is Love	64
1Jn 4:15-21   Perfect Love	69
<b>1 John 5</b>	<b>74</b>
1Jn 5:1-5   Love and Overcoming Faith	74

*Contents*

---

1Jn 5:6-13   God's Testimony Concerning His Son	78
1Jn 5:14-21   Knowledge of Eternal Life	83
<b>Other Publications</b>	<b>88</b>

## Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

### **Old Testament**

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah  
Nah – Nahum  
Hab – Habakkuk  
Zep – Zephaniah  
Hag – Haggai  
Zec – Zechariah  
Mal – Malachi

**New Testament**

Mt – Gospel of Matthew  
Mk – Gospel of Mark  
Lk – Gospel of Luke  
Jn – Gospel of John  
Acts – Acts of the Apostles  
Rom – Letter to the Romans  
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians  
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians  
Gal – Letter to the Galatians  
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians  
Phil – Letter to the Philippians  
Col – Letter to the Colossians  
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians  
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians  
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy  
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy  
Tit – Letter to Titus  
Phlm – Letter to Philemon  
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews  
Jam – Letter of James  
1Pet – First Letter of Peter  
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter  
1Jn – First Letter of John  
2Jn – Second Letter of John  
3Jn – Third Letter of John  
Jude – Letter of Jude  
Rev – Revelation

## Explanation of general format

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS** are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

**BRACKETS** [ ] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

**SHARP BRACKETS** < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** \* are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

**ALL CAPS** in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

## The First Letter of John

### Introduction

The first letter of John is the second writing that we have of him in the Bible. His first writing is the Gospel according to John. After his first letter a second and third letter follow. Also the book of Revelation is from his hand. Therefore we have five writings in total from him in the Bible. His five writings are characterized by Who and what God is. In his Gospel he presents the Lord Jesus as God the Son. In his first letter he shows what eternal life is that God has given to the believer. That life is the Son Himself. That is the life you possess, for “he who has the Son has the life” (1Jn 5:11-12). In the book of Revelation we see God in His government.

Therefore, since we are now going to read and study his first letter, it is about the believer in whom the new life, i.e. the eternal life, is. The letter is not written to a local church, but to the individual believer, thus personally to you. At the same time you are addressed by him as someone who partakes of a company of believers, the family of God. The name ‘children of God’ also reflects that very well. Children who are born of the same parents are related to one another. Children of God are related to one another because they are born of God. That’s why they have life, *eternal* life, i.e. life in its most abundant form (Jn 10:10b). This eternal life is the Lord Jesus Himself (1Jn 5:20).

John shows in this letter how this eternal life works in you as a believer. To see how it expresses itself, you should look at the Lord Jesus. After all He is that new life in you. Therefore you also see that new life in the Gospels. Therein you see the Lord Jesus in His life on earth. Just as life is in Him and has been revealed by Him in the world, it also is in you. Therefore it cannot be otherwise than to manifest itself in your life in exactly the same way.

Now you may say that in your life – and that I say also about myself – the Lord Jesus is not always clearly visible. That is true when it comes down to the practice of your life of faith. However – and it is important to establish and hold that at the beginning of reading this letter – John does not speak

in the first place about our *practice*, but about the *essence* or the *nature* of the eternal life you possess. That goes together with absolute statements.

I will clarify that to you with an example. If you want to examine what water is, what it is made of, you should not examine coffee. Coffee indeed consists nearly one hundred percent of water, but it contains elements that change the taste and color of water and thereby it is not one hundred percent water. You ought to take pure water to know what water consists of. In the same way, if you want to know what eternal life is, which is in you, you are not supposed to look at your practice. In your practice there are many elements that cloud the expression of that life. Therefore you should look at the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is that new, eternal life in its full form. In this letter John also speaks about the practice of your life of faith, but his starting point is the perfection of eternal life as it is in itself. This perfection is in the Lord Jesus and also in you, because you possess Him as your life. John writes penetratingly about this because in his day false teachers crept into the church with a false doctrine that affects the perfection of eternal life. They teach that Christendom is quite a nice start, but that they have more light and a higher knowledge about God.

John makes it clear that if you have eternal life, you have *everything*. The eternal life is *complete* and not 'quite a nice start' of your relationship with Divine Persons. John exposes the spirit of the antichrist. He gives you the proofs that you really do possess eternal life, that this life is from the Lord Jesus and that this life in itself is perfect and unchangeably the same. Therefore, do not let yourself be fooled by people who claim that they are able to help you to go deeper into the mysteries of the Godhead. There is no development of the truth of God about Christ into something that would be more perfect.

## 1 John 1

### **1Jn 1:1-2 | The Word of Life**

*1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—*

V1. John begins to speak without any introduction about the Lord Jesus. He does that in an exceptional way. He presents Him as “the Word of life” which “was from the beginning”. John and the apostles had Him with them in this way. The ‘Word of life’ was perceivable to people.

‘The beginning’ John is speaking about is not the beginning of Genesis 1 (Gen 1:1), where we are brought back to the beginning of the world, the creation. It also does not refer to the beginning he is speaking about in the first verse of his Gospel. That beginning surpasses time, to what had no beginning, for it is said what “the beginning *was*” (Jn 1:1). What John means to say here with ‘beginning’ is the manifestation of eternal life on earth through the life of the Lord Jesus. This ‘beginning’ therefore refers to the revelation of the Lord Jesus as Man on earth, as God revealed in the flesh.

The letter is a response to the error of the so-called ‘gnosticism’. This error is found with people who claim that they ‘know’ – the word ‘gnosis’ means ‘to know’ or ‘to be familiar with’. Gnosticism denies that the Lord Jesus really became flesh and it proclaims the error that He had only been on earth in a human appearance. In response to that John describes Him as true Man Whom he and his fellow apostles have truly seen and with Whom they had fellowship.

The response to all errors and deviation is Christ. In order to see Who He is, we ought to go back to the beginning, i.e. His coming and His life on earth. In Him ‘the Word of life’ has been manifested in all its perfection. Herewith John points back to the first verses of his Gospel: “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men” (Jn 1:4). The fact that John calls Him

here 'the Word of life', means that in Him you can see what life is. There is no life outside of Him. That what is separated from Him has no life. He alone is life and indeed life in perfection.

John and the apostles – he writes about “we” – have “heard”, have “seen”, have “looked at” and have even “touched” the Lord Jesus. In the words that John uses you draw nearer and nearer to Him:

1. 'To hear' can happen from a great distance;
2. 'to see' is closer;
3. 'to look at' is very close to it;
4. 'to touch with the hands' is the closest you can get.

The life that John is presenting to you in this way is therefore not a mythical story, but a concrete reality that is perceivable with the senses. He speaks about a true Person and not about a fictional person (cf. Lk 24:39).

In your discovery of the Lord Jesus you, in a certain sense, also have gone through the four phases John mentions:

1. You first *heard* about Him and owing to that you came to faith. Faith comes by hearing (Rom 10:14).
2. That made your eyes got opened for Him and you began to *see* Him by faith.
3. That caused you to *look at* Him by exploring further in God's Word Who He is.
4. The result is that you also have *touched* Him *with your hands* in a spiritual way: you have really experienced that He is there and that He is Who He says to be.

V2. If eternal life had not been revealed, you could never have known what it is. As it was with the Father, you did not know it. The awesome thing is, that it has been revealed. The eternal God has come out in His Son, the Lord Jesus, and He did that in a place of humiliation and contempt. In that way He can be heard, He can be seen and looked at and also be touched with the hands. He came out to introduce Himself to man. He

came to bring you into the overwhelming fellowship with the Father. He manifested the eternal life.

What eternal life is, is seen in Him. He has shown it. He was born as a Baby, He, the eternal life, which was with the Father. Men were able to come that close to Him that they could even touch Him (Mk 5:27). He came to give to you too that exalted place of fellowship and the full enjoyment of it. As a human being you could not perceive it, let alone enjoy it, if it had not been revealed to you by God's Spirit (1Cor 2:9-10). What John mentions here, is also written in Micah 5 (Mic 5:2). There you read about the Lord Jesus as born in Bethlehem and at the same time as the eternal One.

Before we continue with the next section, I would like to make a general remark about 'eternal life'. Eternal life is presented in two ways by John. In the first place he is talking about eternal life which is in God and that He has given to you when you believed in the Lord Jesus (Jn 3:16). That's how you got eternal life *within* you. In the second place he also talks about eternal life as a sphere of the life *in which* you live, a life sphere or a living environment that you have entered and in which you enjoy eternal life (Jn 17:3).

You can compare it with your natural life. You live, you move and you think. Those are expressions of the life that is *within* you. At the same time you also live *somewhere*. You may live in a city or in a rural area. That is your living environment.

Both aspects of eternal life show how full eternal life is. It is within you and you are living in it. It includes everything. Isn't it awesome to partake of that? The next verses will demonstrate that to you.

Now read 1 John 1:1-2 again.

Reflection: What do you see of the Lord Jesus in these verses?

## 1Jn 1:3-6 | Fellowship and Complete Joy

*3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. 5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and [yet] walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;*

V3. John and the apostles cannot and do not want to keep to themselves what they have seen and heard. It was revealed to them, but they love to pass it on to you and me. They want us to partake of that. They *must* “proclaim” it, for they cannot but speak about it (cf. Acts 4:20). Their mouths spoke out of the abundance of their heart (Mt 12:34b).

‘To proclaim’ has with the meaning of making up a report of what you have learnt. John has learnt from the Lord and he made up a report of that to pass it on to us. Here it is written in a way that whenever you read his report, that proclamation comes to you. This is how I experience it too when I read it. If you read his report and you make yourself aware of it thoroughly, it is like time disappears and it makes you feel like you are in the company of the Lord Jesus during His life on earth.

The purpose of his report is that you “have fellowship” with him and the apostles as witnesses. For the word ‘fellowship’ you could perhaps use the nowadays word ‘relationship’. However, the word relationship does not rightly reflect the real meaning of ‘fellowship’. A relationship makes you think of being related to someone in a certain way or a connection you have with someone. But the word ‘fellowship’ contains much more. It means that you share something together with a person. You have the same part.

Children of God have fellowship with one another because they have Christ as their life. John wants you and me to have fellowship with him and his fellow apostles. By that he thus means that you and I share with them what we and they have in common and that is the Father and the Son.

But having fellowship with the apostles is not a goal in itself. It surpasses that. John wants you to be involved in the fellowship that he and his fellow apostles have “with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”, i.e. with Divine Persons. It is the desire of the apostles to expand the circle of fellowship. John’s purpose is that you together with him and the other apostles have fellowship with the Father and the Son. By saying that he means that they share in the part that the Father has and in the part that the Son has. That fellowship together with the apostles is possible because you have the same life as they have.

In the way John writes it down here – he mentions the Father first – the emphasis is on the fellowship with the Father. Of course the Son is not less, for He is God as the Father is, He is one with Him (Jn 10:30). The distinction is that He, the Son, has explained the Father (Jn 1:18). All who have received Him, the Son, as their life, are now able to consciously enjoy the same fellowship with the Father as He has with the Father. You know the Father as the Father, because the Son is your life. What is always the case with the Son, is now the case with you too. Just as the Son, you want to glorify the Father and magnify and honor Him.

The fellowship with the Father is therefore at the front. Immediately after that follows, as it were in the same breath, that the fellowship is also ‘with His Son Jesus Christ’. It is a fellowship that is at the same level as the fellowship with the Father. John is perfectly clear about that. By what has been declared to you about eternal life and what you have believed, you also have fellowship with the Son. The heart of the Father is focused on the Son and now your heart is also focused on Him.

I repeat what I said earlier, that it is not about the *degree* that you live up to and experience it, but about what is *typical* to the new nature that you have received.

V4. John declares with words, but he also declares by ‘writing’. In doing so, he records what he has proclaimed for the coming generations, so that everyone who hears it in this way, can be involved in the fellowship. Everything is recorded in the written Word. Therefore you do not need to follow some training or be taught by some or other enlightened spirit

about this. It is written in God's Word, you can read it yourself and personally enjoy it.

John addresses all believers in what they have in Christ. He who has life, has fellowship. He who has fellowship, enjoys it. It gives the highest degree of joy. How could it be otherwise? There is "complete" joy if you enjoy fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

This joy is the joy of the Lord Jesus, Who speaks twice about "My joy" (Jn 15:11; 17:13). It is a joy which He fully wishes His disciples to have. The way He went, shows the content of His joy. He walked in undisturbed fellowship with the Father and always did what pleased the Father. That was His joy. He knew and enjoyed the undivided love of the Father. If you want to know and enjoy that full joy, *His* joy, you ought to abide in His love (Jn 15:9). That happens if you keep His commandments (Jn 15:10). The enjoyment of complete or full joy depends on a life in obedience.

You see that in the life of the Son. He is your life and therefore it is the same with you. You will certainly feel your incompetence. Do you know what you may do because of that? You can pray to the Father in the Name of the Lord Jesus. The result will be that you receive full joy (Jn 16:24).

V5. After his introduction, in which he mainly deals with *life*, John speaks in verse 5 about *light*. In his Gospel 'life' and 'light' are also closely connected (Jn 1:4-5). The life that you received from God is life that is lived in the light. It belongs to the light and not to anything else. Your new life has got nothing to do with darkness and sin. That's why that is the point of John's message. He has not invented that message, but he announces what he has heard from Him, the Lord Jesus. The message says "that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all".

You will seek in vain in the Gospel according to John for a statement of the Lord in which He uses these precise words. There is no need for such a statement, because it is clear that His whole life proclaimed that message, as it were. If you read about Him in John's Gospel and see Him, you see light, while you see nothing that has got to do with darkness.

When it is stated here that God is light, it doesn't mean that it is a feature of God, but that it is about His Being, about Who He is. His whole Being is

light. All His features come from that. God is also love. That is said hereafter in the letter, even twice (1Jn 4:8,16).

It is important to announce that God is light. It is about fellowship with Divine Persons. That fellowship can only happen in the light, in accordance with the perfect purity of God. God is always light. He was that too when there was no creation yet. He is light and is also *in* the light, He is surrounded by it (verse 7).

The fact that despite that, it is still said that in Him “there is no darkness at all”, has to do with time. It indicates that God is related to His creation, where spiritual darkness entered through sin. You also read that the Lord Jesus came in the darkness and that the darkness did not comprehend it (Jn 1:5).

V6. The fact that God is light and that our fellowship can only be enjoyed in the light, excludes any possibility of walking in the darkness. It is absolutely not possible to say that we have fellowship with God and the Lord Jesus, while we walk in the darkness at the same time. John speaks in general terms and even includes himself thereby. You can derive that from the word “we”. After all, it is about speaking out a particular confession. Then it is something that concerns each one who confesses to be a Christian and says to live in fellowship with God and Christ.

John points out that it is basically impossible that there is a relation between light and darkness. It is not possible to belong to light and to darkness at the same time. Here you see again that John presents the things in black and white. His concern, so to speak, is not *how* you walk, but *where* you walk. His concern is not your practice, but your new life. Practice is certainly important and your new life ought to be visible in it. We will pay attention to that later. The point now is, what is typical for the new life, where it is taking place and where it cannot possibly take place.

It is a lie if a person says he has fellowship with the Father and the Son, while he walks in the darkness. Such a person does not live in accordance with the truth. He ‘does not practice the truth’, for he does not know it and does not have it. He may present himself as a person who knows and has

the truth, but his walk in the darkness, thus apart from God, shows that he is lying.

Now read 1 John 1:3-6 again.

Reflection: What do you learn in these verses about fellowship and about joy?

## 1Jn 1:7-10 | To Walk In the Light and Cleansing

*7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

V7. In verse 6 you have read about ‘walking in the darkness’ and now you read about “walk in the Light”. Needless to say that ‘walk’ does not regard an activity with your legs, but it is about your whole conduct. You may say that the ‘walk’ makes visible to others what you confess with your mouth. Furthermore it is important, I repeat, that it is about *where* you walk. The point is a person is walking either in the darkness or he is walking in the light. As a believer you do not walk in the darkness, but you are always in the light.

If you sin – and that unfortunately can happen, as it is also noticed by John – you sin, so to say, in the light. In that case you join together what can not to be joined together. The contrast between walking in the light and walking in the darkness is not the contrast between faithful believers and unfaithful or failing believers. The walk in the light and the walk in the darkness indicate the difference between the walk of believers and the walk of *un*believers. Every person who has new life, walks in the light. He who has no new life, walks in the darkness.

The walk in the light is the walk that perfectly fits with Him Who “is in the Light”. You do have Christ as your life. He is perfectly in the light and He is the light. Because He is your life, you are also in the light and you walk in it.

However, you do not walk there alone. You are in the light and you walk in it with everyone who also has eternal life. You have fellowship with everyone who walks in the light and everyone who walks there has fellowship with you. You share with one another what you have received in the Father and the Son. The new life is not a strictly individual matter, but something you share with others. It is about fellowship.

The basis of that fellowship is the cleansing “blood of Jesus His Son”. John mentions the name ‘Jesus’, which refers to Him Who became Man to be able to shed His blood. At the same time he calls Him ‘His Son’, which refers to His eternal existence as the Son of God. The value of the blood is eternally unchangeable. John emphasizes that the blood is the ground on which you stand before God. Only God knows its full value and He deals with you according to that. If you let that sink in well, it gives peace in your heart. The important thing is not *your* valuation of the blood, but *God’s* valuation of it. If you realize that you may also know that it is the basis of all blessings that God has given to you.

V8. This awareness will keep you from saying that you have no sin. You would deceive yourself if you would say that and it would prove that the truth is not in you. In the light of God’s truth, you have seen rightly and also acknowledged what is in you.

Perhaps the danger is not so great that you will say you have no sin. Nevertheless, it may happen that you do not specifically call sin ‘a sin’, but you call it a ‘little mistake’. You may also see sin as a disorder, as something for which you may probably excuse yourself, as if you could not help it anyway. In fact you are then saying that you have no sin and you are deceiving yourself. It is important that call sin real sin. Then you really prove that the truth is in you.

V9. The truth causes you to confess your sin. If you do that, God forgives you your sin. He does not do that only because He is full of love and because He is merciful, but also because He is “faithful and righteous”. If a person confesses his sins, He can, and you may even say, He *has to*, cleanse him from all unrighteousness. Why is it that you are allowed to say that he *has to*? Because otherwise He would be unfaithful to the value of the blood of Christ. He would be unrighteous if He would deny the power of the blood of Jesus, His Son. Of course He cannot deny the power of the blood. Therefore, if a person confesses his sin, He forgives him.

Confession, by the way, is a profound work. To confess means that you speak out that you judge sin in the same way God does. Therefore you do not speak about a ‘little mistake’ and you do not look for an excuse. Only if you see things in the way God does, you will understand the necessity of

confession and you yourself will come to confession. The forgiveness you then experience, is a blessing, a relief. It gives you room and new strength to continue to live with Him (Psa 32:1,7).

V10. If you know what it is to confess your sins, you do not say that you have not sinned. Such people were there in the days of John and they still are in our days. As in verse 6 and verse 8 John again puts it in general terms in verse 10 and says: "If we say." He again includes himself. He says it this way because what he is talking about applies to everyone who confesses to be a Christian.

Saying that you have not sinned goes a step further than saying that you have no sin, as it is said in verse 8. He who says that he has no sin, denies that he has a sinful nature within himself. Saying that you do not have that sinful nature, is self-deception. But he who says that he has not sinned, claims that he has never committed a sin. That is much worse than self-deception, for in this way God is made a liar. After all, God says in His Word that all men have sinned (Rom 3:23). In such a person there is nothing of God at all. He shows an attitude of rebellion and an own will, an attitude that is clearly against the Word of God. "His word is not in" such a person.

Now read 1 John 1:7-10 again.

Reflection: What do you learn in these verses about walking in the light and about sin and the cleansing from it?

## 1 John 2

### 1Jn 2:1-2 | Advocate and Propitiation

*1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for [those of] the whole world.*

V1. From what John said in the above-mentioned, two misconceptions can arise. The first is that you may be overwhelmed by a kind of discouragement. After all you cannot do anything about it if you sin, for sin is still in you, isn't it? The second is that you may think: 'It is not a big deal if I sin, for if I sin, I can just confess it, right?' As a response to these questions the word of John sounds: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." Right, you may say, I am willing to accept that, but unfortunately, it still happens that I do sin. Well, says John, in case you sin you may know that you have "an Advocate with the Father".

In the way John takes note of this, you see that he takes into consideration that it is *possible* for you to sin, but he does *not* consider it *inevitable*. But in case it does happen, you do not need to despair. It's not that sin is not bad. Sin is always awful. How terrible sin is, is best seen on the cross of Calvary, where God brought His nothing-sparing judgment on sin upon His beloved Son. At the same time that is the basis for the work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate with the Father in case it does happen that you sin.

If you sin, it will cause your fellowship with the Father to be disturbed. You indeed still remain His child, but because of the sin you've committed you cannot enjoy it. When one of my children does something that causes him to deserve punishment, it stands in the way for me to show him that I love him. Indeed I love him, but our relationship has been fractured. What has come between us must first be resolved by repentance.

As an "Advocate with the Father" the Lord Jesus does what is necessary to restore your relationship with the Father. The way He does that you see in the denial by Peter. The Lord leads Peter to repentance by reminding him

of what He said to him earlier (Lk 22:61-62). Because of that repentance Peter's fellowship with the Lord has been restored. If you come to a confession of sin, you owe that to Him; it is His work.

He is pleading your case as "the righteous" with the Father. He represents you with the Father as the One Who bore the judgment on the sin that you have to confess. He is the Righteous because He always has perfectly fulfilled the righteousness of God in His life.

V2. He also perfectly fulfilled God's righteousness toward sin. After all, He is the "propitiation" for the sin that you have committed. The work that He has accomplished is the basis of the restoration of your fellowship with the Father.

He is of course not only the propitiation for that particular sin of yours. You may know that He is the propitiation for all your sins and also for all the sins of all God's children. Of course it couldn't be otherwise. When He accomplished the work at the cross He knew exactly who have believed in Him since Adam and who was going to believe in the future. Of all those people He knew all their sins and became the propitiation for them.

But it does not stop there. It goes further. He is also the propitiation for the whole world. Now it is important for you to read well what is said here. It is *not* written that He is the propitiation for *the sins of* the whole world. This is how some people read it which can lead to the erroneous conclusion of the false doctrine of the so-called universal atonement. [Note: In this verse the words "[those of]" are put in brackets, which means they don't belong to the inspired Bible text.]

According to those who defend the universal atonement, all people and even satan with his angels will ultimately be saved. This is a reprehensible conclusion that is against the clear statements of the Scripture concerning an eternal torment of unrepentant sinners in hell (Rev 20:10). Do not let yourself be deceived by this!

The work of the Lord Jesus is that great and the value of His blood reaches that far, that on that ground God *can* save each person. That is God's side of the truth. The other side of the truth is that only the person who repents, becomes a partaker of that. These things go beyond our logical thinking.

We can only look at the different aspects of God's truth separately – we know in part, in pieces (cf. 1Cor 13:12) – and admire and worship Him for what we see then.

Now read 1 John 2:1-2 again.

Reflection: What do you learn in these verses about the work of Christ?

### 1Jn 2:3-11 | Obedience and Love

3 *By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. 7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. 9 The one who says he is in the Light and [yet] hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

V3. In the next verses John will pay attention to the characteristics of the new life. In that way he wants to teach his readers, including you, how they can recognize the new life. That is how he wants to encourage them and you. The fact is that false brothers have crept in who can say wonderful things about knowing God. They claim to know God and they even say that they know Him in a special and profound way. However, those people turn out to be deceivers. That leads to the question about how you can recognize whether a person knows God, and how you can recognize it with yourself.

To end all uncertainty and to confirm the children of God in their faith, John gives five characteristics. Those characteristics are important for you too. Two of them are in the section that you have now before you. These are *obedience* and *love*. The third characteristic is that the new life *does not sin* (1Jn 3:6). The fourth is about the *possession of the Holy Spirit* (1Jn 3:24) and the fifth is in connection with the *doctrine of Christ* (1Jn 4:2).

The first characteristic to recognize whether a person knows God, is that he is obedient. That applies also to you. The proof that a person knows God, is not delivered by speaking about spectacular visions that he may

have had or impressive gifts that he may have. The point is whether a person obeys the commandments of God and of the Lord Jesus. Can you say that you want to do the commandments of the Lord Jesus? Do you love Him that much that you are willing to obey Him and walk in His ways? When Paul came to conversion, the proof of the conversion was not that he suddenly spoke in tongues, but that he asked: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10).

It's not about thinking: 'I do not always walk in obedience and therefore I am not converted.' The point is that you as a child of God discern in your heart the desire to walk after His commandments. That desire proves that eternal life is in you. By the way, the commandments here are not the ten commandments that were established in the law of Mount Sinai (Exo 20:1-17), but everything that the Father says. You see that perfectly in the life of the Lord Jesus. The law was not His life principle – although He perfectly fulfilled the law – but the commandments of the Father (Jn 10:17-18; 12:49; 14:31).

V4. Now if someone comes who says he knows God, then to you is now given a means by John to test that. Do you see with such a person that he does not consider the commandments of God and do you notice that there is no desire for him to do the will of God? Then you must classify him as a liar. He is doing his own will. The truth is not in him. He doesn't have the Lord Jesus, Who is the truth, as his life.

V5. If you notice with someone that he keeps the word that the Lord Jesus has spoken, you can be sure that he knows God. It is striking that John speaks about "His word" in verse 5, while in verse 4 he talks about "His commandments". You may probably define the distinction as follows. 'His commandments' are all desires the Lord has regarding your life. Each of His desires is a command to you. This is how He dealt with the desires of His Father. 'His word' encompasses more. It regards not only His desires, but also Who He Himself is in His Person, what is within Him, what His own glory is.

If you keep His Word, you do not only fulfill His desires, but you show Who He Himself is. Then it is not only about a practice, but also about an

attitude, a radiance. It is the radiance of the love of God that is perfectly present in such a person and which comes to expression unimpeded.

If that is the case with you, then in that way you acknowledge that you are in Him, i.e. in God, that is, that you live in fellowship with Him. I repeat, it is not about the extent of your experience, but about whether you acknowledge that this is true. How weak it may be seen and experienced in practice, each child of God will wholeheartedly say that this is the case with him. At the same time he will desire to experience more and more of it and that it will be more and more visible in his life. That is also an extra proof that it is present.

V6. That also means that you abide in Him, that you dwell in Him. That is not a temporary matter that can change, but it is a permanent dwelling place. It is not that at one moment you abide in Him and at another moment you are not. How could it be possible for you to have eternal life at one time and at the other time don't have it? That you abide in Him also becomes visible in your walk. Therein also becomes visible what was visible in the walk of the Lord Jesus. Just as He did, do you seek the honor of God. He is the center in your life. The sphere of your life is your relationship with Him. At the same time it is a touchstone to test if it is really true when a person claims to be in God.

V7. The commandment John speaks about in this verse and the following verses, is the commandment of love. As an introduction and in accordance to that he addresses the readers as "beloved". The commandment of love is not a new commandment, but an old one. By that John does not refer to the commandment that God gave to His people at Mount Sinai to love Him. That commandment only made clear that man was not able to keep it. The commandment that John is talking about is spoken out by the Lord Jesus. It doesn't come from Mount Sinai, but, so to speak, from the Father's house. The new commandment has another starting point.

That's the reason why you read here that it is a commandment "which you have had from the beginning". That refers to the time that the Lord Jesus was on earth. When the Lord Jesus spoke it out, He spoke of a new commandment (Jn 13:34). That proves that it does not refer to the commandment of Sinai. Now that John speaks about it, he can say that he is

speaking about an old commandment that they've heard, for it was already mentioned by the Lord Jesus.

V8. On the other hand, it is also "a new commandment". What then is new? It is the commandment that is given to people who have the new, eternal life that enables a person to love. That new life is the Lord Jesus. The new commandment, therefore, has another origin and it also has another target group. There is a new company of people on earth. Those people are not only born again, just as each believer in the Old Testament was, but they have the Son as their life and in that way they have been brought into fellowship with the Father. Therefore it is said "which is true in Him", the Son, and it is also true "in you", the believer.

At the same time that makes the enormous contrast with the world around you clear and it also shows what is happening to the world. The world is in the darkness; it is completely surrounded by it. The true light that shines in it only makes the darkness more tangible. The darkness is a temporary matter. The light is not a temporary matter. It is shining now already and it will always shine. It is the "true Light" and therefore it has got nothing to do with the wandering light of the false teachers who boast on having higher light and higher knowledge. Those people belong to the darkness and are just as temporary as the darkness.

It is a good thing to consider that the darkness indeed will pass away in creation, but it will last forever as the place where everything that is related to the darkness is locked-up. The Lord Jesus addresses that as "outer darkness" (Mt 8:12).

V9. Also he is "in the darkness" who "says he is in the Light", while he "hates his brother". You may think: 'But a brother is of course not in darkness, right?' That is true. Therefore it is not about a true brother here, but about a person who pretends to be one (cf. 1Cor 5:11). He acts as a brother and approaches the believers as his brothers, while in reality he hates them. That appears from his efforts to convince the believers of his so called great insight in Who God is and thereby spreads false doctrines about the Lord Jesus and His work. There has never been any light in him, he has always been in the darkness and he is there "until now".

You may possibly dislike a brother occasionally. That is not right and it must not remain like that. But hating your brother means that there is totally no love for him present at all. If you are dealing with a true brother you will always discover something of the new life in him. Ultimately the love for that brother will prevail. You will surely notice that love with yourself because you will dislike yourself for disliking your brother.

V10. The observation that you love your brother – and you will be able to sincerely say that about yourself –, means that you abide in the light. Love and light belong together. They are the Being and nature of God. Because you have the Divine nature, love and light are perfect with you. Therefore you will not be a stumbling block for another person by tempting him to sin. There is nothing in you that could possibly cause another person to fall into sin. That what is in you, comes from God (Psa 119:165). And He certainly tempts nobody to sin, does He? The new life that you have, is the life of the Lord Jesus. You follow Him and therefore you have the light of life (Jn 8:12; 11:9-10; 12:35; Pro 4:18-19).

V11. That's altogether completely absent with a person who hates his brother. The contrast is enormous and again typical for the way John presents the things. Love makes a person to walk in the light. Hatred makes a person walk in darkness, without knowing where he is going. These kinds of people have eyes blinded by darkness. So how could such a person be a good guide for another person (Mt 15:14)?

Now read 1 John 2:3-11 again.

Reflection: What are the characteristics of the new life? How do you recognize them and where are they missing?

**1Jn 2:12-17 | Fathers, Young Men, Children**

*12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. 15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and [also] its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*

V12. In the previous verses you saw that there is a radical separation between light and darkness, between love and hate, between you as a child of God and the world. John will now write about some other things to his "little children". He makes clear that not all children of God are spiritually at the same level. Just like in natural life, also in spiritual life there are different growing stages:

1. The spiritual growing process begins with the stage of 'child'.
2. Then the stage of a 'young man' follows.
3. Finally, spiritual maturity is reached when a person becomes a 'father'.

Before John elaborates on the different growing stages, he first says what those different groups have in common. That is that their "sins have been forgiven ... for His name's sake". This great blessing is the part of every child of God. This is where the assurance of the forgiveness of sin is shining. In case you would be doubting (a little bit) about whether God has indeed forgiven your sins, then you need to carefully consider this verse. The assurance of the forgiveness of sins is not in yourself, but in God and in Christ and His work. Your sins are forgiven "for His name's sake" (cf. Psa 25:11; Isa 43:25).

It does not say that your sins have been 'removed', but "forgiven". 'Being forgiven' shows the heart of God. In the forgiveness God opens His arms and wraps them around you. God does not forgive reluctantly, but He likes to forgive (Psa 86:5). He receives the prodigal son and gives him all the glory of His house. He especially gives him His arms and His heart (Lk 15:20-24).

I once heard a nice story of a man who was doubting about whether his sins were really forgiven. This man was told that when he has asked God for forgiveness, he could surely trust that God has cast all his sins 'behind His back' (Isa 38:17). However, he could hardly believe that. That may be true, he said, but when God turns around, He will surely see them again. Then they told him that God has cast them 'into the depths of the sea' (Mic 7:19). Yes, the man replied, but when God drains the sea they will become visible again. Then they told him that God will 'remember his sins no more' (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:12), that is, that He will never refer to them again. Forgiveness is in the magnificence of God's Being, in His Name. That convinced the man. He was now assured that also his sins were forgiven.

V13a. After the determination that the assurance of forgiveness of sins is the part that all children of God share, John addresses the three groups separately. He starts with the "fathers". It is God's purpose for all His children (both brothers and sisters!) to grow up to be 'fathers' in the faith. A 'father' has gone through the phases of a child and a young man. A father knows Him "who is from the beginning", that is Christ, the Son of God.

You may say that this also applies to the child and the young man. That is true, but by presenting it like that, John makes clear that Christ is *sufficient* for a father. Fathers are those who live closely to Christ and closely to the Scripture. The characteristic of a father is that he has been disconnected from the world to be fully in the other world where He is in Whom everything is to be found for the heart of the Father. The only important thing for him is to have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

V13b. The "young men" are in the middle of the development of their spiritual life. The young man is involved in a warfare against the wicked one. Nevertheless he may know that he has overcome the evil one because

he has the new life. That doesn't mean that the evil one leaves him alone. The evil one seeks to tempt him to love the world. This is elaborated on later in verse 15. When you are a young man you stand in the victory. From your position as a conqueror in Christ (Rom 8:37) you are able to live a life of victory.

V13c. The "children" in the faith, the babies, are not characterized by struggles in the first place. They have peace in their heart because they know "the Father". They rest in His faithfulness, love and care. Inwardly they have rest and they feel "like a weaned child [rests] against his mother" (Psa 131:2). They do not need to grow in the knowledge of the Father. They *know* Him and have a personal relationship with Him.

Before we continue I would like to make a general remark. You have seen that John indicates what is typical for each group. That, however, does not mean that each characteristic is specifically only for the group that is being regarded. Also a father in Christ has his struggles at times and he also knows what it is to rest at the heart of the Father. In the same way the young man also has the moments of rest and of being fully satisfied by the Lord Jesus. The same applies to the children. They certainly have their struggles at times, while they also experience at times that the only important thing is Christ.

V14a. To encourage the different groups in their growth, John addresses them once more. That gives them an extra assurance against the persistent attempts of the false teachers to deceive them and to draw them away from the assurance and perfection of the new life they have.

Regarding the "fathers" John has nothing more to say than he has already said. Christ is sufficient for them. There is nothing more that could complement that.

V14b. With the "young men" it is different. He first points out to them what they are and what they have done. They are "strong"; they have strength. They do not have that strength in themselves, but they derive it from "the word of God" that "abides" in them. The truth lives in them because the new life is in them. Therefore they also have overcome the evil one.

A beautiful example of that is to be seen with the Lord Jesus when He is tempted in the wilderness. There He defeats satan by making use of the Word of God (Mt 4:1-11). For that reason it is of great importance for you to read the Word of God with the greatest attention and to absorb it. Then it will have an impact in your life and it will cause you to overcome in situations of conflict. If you do not do that you will surely suffer defeat.

V15. As far as the young man is concerned, most of the conflict material is provided in his confrontation with “the world”. There is a close relationship between the world and the evil one. The evil one uses the world to catch you. Now you must not think that the world only consists of clearly sinful things as pornography, violence and lies. Such things are being rejected by every sincere child of God with abhorrence.

The world, however, consists of much more subtle forms of sin. You may as well reject pornography, but you may then find a magazine in the waiting room of the physician or the dentist in which it appears. You read it with the ‘pious’ excuse that it is a good thing to know what the world has to offer. But you would have never taken such a magazine in your hand if a brother or sister were with you.

Remember well that the world is controlled by satan. He is the ruler and god of this world (Jn 14:30; 2Cor 4:4). The world as a sphere of influence of the evil one may come to you in a very friendly appearance. It may help you for instance to express yourself in such a way to find favor with another person or to make you have what you loved to have. The way you talk and also the way you dress yourself, the way of spending your time and the goals you pursue, may all show how much you love the world.

It is all about your perspective on life. The evil one wants to tempt you to look at it in *his* way. That’s how he operated with Eve when he drew her attention to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She looked at it and saw that this was exactly the way satan had presented it to her. As soon as you allow anything of love for the world, you shut yourself off from the love of the Father.

V16. The world is characterized by everything that’s in it. John summarizes everything that is in the world in three things: the flesh – that is not

the sinful flesh, but your body with all its needs –, the eyes and life. In themselves they are not sinful, but due to the fall of man they became instruments of sin. These are the three aspects of your being as a human, aspects that determine your personality.

The ranking in which John puts these aspects is the same as with Eve (Gen 3:6), but contrary to the ranking God uses (1Thes 5:23). Eve sees that the tree

1. is good *for food*;
2. is a delight to the *eyes*;
3. is desirable to make one *wise*.

Since the fall of man, the body became an idol. The lust of the flesh started to be predominant. Linked to that is the lust of the eyes. Advertising for instance is focused on the eye. The product, whatever it may be, stirs up the lust for it, which is dormant present in you. What comes through the eye to you, penetrates much deeper in you than what you hear. As soon as the eyes are captivated by the product, something you of course seem to need to be happy, you become obsessed with it. In the meantime you have been totally swallowed by the world and totally separated from God. Pride has made you a prisoner. Pride appears from your willfulness and probably even your irrepressible efforts to get what is presented to you.

V17. The pursuit of the world is temporary, it cannot stand. Opposite to that is doing “the will of God”. If you put your mind to that, you are doing something that does not pass away, but something that “lives forever”. By pursuing this you prove that you are born of God. John therefore says that “the one who does the will of God lives forever”. Is it hard to choose?

Now read 1 John 2:12-17 again.

Reflection: Where are the dangers for you in closing yourself off to the Father’s love?

## 1Jn 2:18-24 | Characteristics of the Last Hour

*18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not [really] of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but [they went out], so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.*

V18. After John has addressed the fathers and the young men, he now addresses the children or babies in faith. He ensures them that they live in the last hour. Of course that applies to all other believers, including himself. We all know that we live in the last hour. Nevertheless, the babies in faith are especially addressed because they in particular form a prey to the dangers that characterize this “last hour”. Actually the last hour is characterized by the coming of “many antichrists”.

You also come across expressions that are similar to the expression ‘the last hour’, such as ‘later times’ (1Tim 4:1) and ‘the last days’ (2Tim 3:1). In ‘the last days’ spirits will appear in professing Christianity that are of a more serious nature than the things of ‘later times’. The situation that is described here by John is even more serious, for it is about the antichrist here. In him you see the exaltation of man that takes the place of Christ.

The meaning of the word ‘antichrist’ is twofold. It means both ‘against Christ’ and ‘instead of Christ’. Both characteristics appear in 2 Thessalonians 2 (2Thes 2:4). There Paul speaks about the antichrist as the man of sin who exalts himself ‘against’ God and who displays himself ‘as being’ God, thus who takes the place of God.

The antichrist has not come yet, he still is to come, but he, as a matter of fact, has his heralds and trailblazers. These are the antichrists and they are

many. As already said, the danger of antichrists is the greatest for the children. Antichrists are persons who bring false teachings about the Father and the Son. The antichrists for instance may possibly say sensitive things about the Lord Jesus, but they deny Him as the Son of God. False teachings about Christ are more easily accepted by new converts than by fathers in Christ, the matured believers to whom Christ is everything they need.

V19. In the days of John the antichrists went out from the midst of the believers. That also caused the 'children' to be confused. They formerly had those teachers in their midst and had accepted their ministry. Now all of a sudden they were not there anymore. But John eases them. Their going out reveals that none of those false teachers belonged to the company of believers. They were deceivers who did not care at all about the children, but on the contrary they tried to catch them. They certainly did not belong to the children of God. If that were the case they would have remained. John uses this simple reasoning to make clear that they were wrong people.

You might wonder about that in relation to the times in which we live. The antichrists do not go out anymore, but establish themselves in professing Christianity. The antichrists do not go out anymore because of the confusion in professing Christianity. The Christians are no longer a unity and they have not collectively resisted against the false doctrines anymore for a long time already. At the time I am writing this, it is allowed (here in the Netherlands) that a reverend of the protestant church of the Netherlands, can even deny God in his teachings, and can still keep his position as a reverend. Nonetheless nothing changes the fact that such people are not from us from the beginning and do not belong in the Christian fellowship of the family of God.

V20. As a young believer you may possibly meet all kinds of teachings. What is true and what not? What should you believe and what not? It often happens that a false teaching is brought in a pleasant way and by eloquent people. Still, I sometimes hear from the young believers: 'I don't know what it is, but it doesn't 'feel' right'. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. As a young believer you may actually be a favorite target of satan to deceive you in your faith, but through your conversion to God and your

faith in the Lord Jesus you have “an anointing from the Holy One”, due to which you know all things.

With ‘the anointing from the Holy One’ is meant that you have received the Holy Spirit, He is ‘the anointing’. He is given to you by the Lord Jesus, He is ‘the Holy One’, when you came to faith in Him (Eph 1:13; Jn 14:26). The word ‘anointing’ implies that you have been enabled to discern whether something comes from God or from His enemy.

The Lord Jesus is called here ‘the Holy One’. That emphasizes the contrast to the *unholy* teachings that inevitably lead to unholy practices. In the Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus has given you a resource to recognize the lie. The lie is everything that goes against God’s Word, which is the truth. What is contrary to the Word of God, you can reject immediately. The Holy Spirit uses only the Word of God in order to teach you about the Father and the Son. In the light of the Bible you can reject all talks as lies from people who draw from other resources and who want you to believe that they can give you a deeper insight in Christ.

V21. John does not write this because you do not know the truth. He confirms that you know the truth. You also know that there is no lie of the truth. It is not possible to mix lie with truth. But that is just the way the deceivers want to exert their influence on you. They will never come up with a plain lie, but they wrap the lie in truths. A person who says many true things and also a little bit of lie is not of the truth. His source is the lie and what he says comes from the devil, the father of the lie (Jn 8:44b). All good things are used by the devil to cover the lie and thus gain access to the children of God.

The truth is what you have in the Scriptures. Everything outside of it is lie. It is good to consider that believers may differ in *insight* in the truth. But that is an entirely different matter than what is at issue here. Here the point is the contrast between lie and truth. You are not to accuse a person for telling a lie if he thinks differently than you about a certain truth, nor is the other person allowed to do that with you.

V22. “The liar”, that is he who uses the lie, can be recognized by a twofold denial. It is someone

1. "who denies that Jesus is the Christ" and
2. "who denies the Father and the Son".

The liar is the antichrist, the top instrument of satan in whom his deceitfulness is fully revealed. The spearhead of his denial is the Lord Jesus.

First you read that he denies 'that Jesus is the Christ'. That means that he denies that the Man Jesus is the same as the Christ of God. 'Christ' means the same as 'Messiah'. As Christ or Messiah His relation to the *Jewish people* is in the forefront.

Then you read that he 'denies the Father and the Son'. That means that he denies that there is a relationship of perfect unity in the Godhead between the Father and the Son. This relationship is the core of the *Christian faith*. Jesus the Christ is the Son of the Father.

V23. The Father and the Son are inseparable from each other. Therefore, whoever denies the Son, neither has the Father. If you confess the Son, His Father is also your Father. The Son reveals the Father. There is no revelation of the Father outside the Son. The only way to know the Father is through the Son (Jn 8:19; 14:7); only through the Son you can see the Father (Jn 14:9); honoring the Son is the only way to honor the Father (Jn 5:23). You see that it is all about the Son. The many talks about 'God' in professing Christianity is deceptive, because it often happens without any thought about the Son.

Speaking about 'God' also bridges the distance between Christendom and Judaism and Islam. Orthodox Judaism and Islam deny the essential truth of Christendom and are in the fullest sense antichristian. The rapprochement between the religions doesn't change Judaism and Islam, but it erodes Christendom by taking the core out of it. The big question to test the truth of a statement still remains: "What do you think about the Christ?" (Mt 22:42a).

V24. John presented the liar in his activity. It is important for you as a young believer, a child in Christ, to watch out for that liar. You must not let yourself be confused by the deceitful way in which he tries to present the truth to you. The simple protection for that, is that you let that which you

have heard from the beginning abide in you. If you do that you will also abide in the Son and in the Father.

You are referred back to the beginning. What did you hear about the truth back then? Then you heard about Him Who is from the beginning, the Word of life that was with the Father and which was manifested (1Jn 1:1-2). When you accepted what you have heard from Him from God's Word, you received Him as your life. He is in you now, He abides in you. Because that is a fact you abide in the Son and in the Father. That implies that you live in fellowship with the Son and the Father. Be aware of that and don't let yourself be robbed from that enjoyment by false teachers who want to tell you that it can all be more beautiful.

Now read 1 John 2:18-24 again.

Reflection: What is John warning you of and how does he encourage you?

## 1Jn 2:25-29 | Anointing and Abiding In Him

*25 This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. 26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. 28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. 29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.*

V25. As a child in faith, that which you have heard from the beginning abides in you and as a result of that you abide in the Son and the Father. There is not the slightest separation between you and the Son and the Father. It is not about whether you always experience it, but it is about how it is. Your feelings are not the measure, but that which God has promised to those who believe is the measure.

God has made to us a “promise”. That promise is: “eternal life”. It is not a promise of which the fulfilment is still to come. You have what is promised, that is eternal life, because you believe. God has promised that he who believes in His only begotten Son will receive eternal life (Jn 3:16). Do you think that God would promise something He would not fulfill? That is impossible and therefore there is no room for any uncertainty.

As I already noted at the beginning, there is, beside the aspect of eternal life as the new life in you, also the aspect of eternal life as a sphere of life in which you live. That too belongs to what is promised that you have received. The sphere you have turned into through faith and in which you abide is the fellowship with the Father and the Son.

V26. John writes this all in order to arm you against those who seek to “deceive” you concerning you being a child of God. Even if you have been converted for only a short time, you have the new life in its fullness. Nothing is missing. It is not the beginning of something that is yet imperfect and to which by new truths outside the Bible one thing or another must be added to make it complete. The false teachers are assuming that there

is a higher truth to be found in the mysticism of the invisible and that they have the key to it.

V27. Do not let yourself be dragged by these deceptive guide spirits to look for the so-called missing things. It is totally different with you. You absolutely do not need such false teachers, for you are anointed with the Holy Spirit Whom you have received from God and Christ. God's Spirit, Who abides in you and Who will never leave you (Jn 14:16), will guide you into all the truth (Jn 16:13).

You are not dependent on certain people who claim that you will not be able to come to the full knowledge of the truth without them. *The Spirit* teaches you all things (Jn 14:26). *He* testifies about the Lord Jesus and makes clear what is true and not a lie (Jn 15:26). Even if you would only know just a little bit of the truth and you are not able to refute a false doctrine, you will still be able to sense what is the truth and therefore be able to reject the lie (cf. Jn 10:4-5).

Of course this doesn't mean that you would not need any teaching and that attending the meetings where the Word is explained and that reading Bible study books would be a waste of time. Christ has given gifts to His church, amongst others that of a teacher to edify His church (Eph 4:11). To disregard that gift by not making use of it, means to disregard the Giver of it and that will at least result in spiritual skewing.

The important thing here is that you are able to sense through the Spirit what God's truth is. Through the Spirit you have the capacity to discern the lie from the truth. By what you have been taught by the Spirit you know that you abide in Him. The Spirit does not sow doubt but He affirms.

By the way, 'Him' in "abide in Him" may indicate both God and the Lord Jesus. It is one of the characteristics of the letters of John, that it is not always clear whether 'He' or 'Him' indicates the Father or the Son. That doesn't matter, for both Persons of the Godhead are equal to each other.

V28. John again as an old believer addresses all children of God as his spiritual children. He exhorts you to "abide in Him". In that way He wants to exhort you to be aware of your fellowship with the Father and the Son and to remain in that atmosphere. This appeal of John is with a view to the

appearance of the Lord Jesus. In that way he refers to His coming which he himself expects.

If you live in conscious fellowship with the Lord Jesus you will look forward to Him with boldness and also with eagerness. If you live for yourself and not in fellowship with Him, you will be ashamed when He comes. You will, as it were, turn down your eyes. You certainly do not want that, do you? Therefore remain aware of having your abode in Him. When the Lord Jesus appears and every eye sees Him (Rev 1:7), each man will acknowledge that the Son is righteous and that He righteously exercises the judgment. You know that already now.

V29. This speaking about the appearance of the Son on earth is a reason for John to continue with passing on characteristics that are typical for the children of God. From what he has written earlier you know that what matters to him is to make clear that everyone who has the Lord Jesus as his life, is characterized by that life. He who has that life, the eternal life, is “born of Him”. John uses this expression for the first time in his letter.

He who is born of God has the nature of God and shows it by practicing “righteousness”. The Lord Jesus is righteous and therefore you see that characteristic with each child of God. (Of the Lord Jesus, by the way, nowhere do you read that He is born of God, because He *is* God.)

With practicing righteousness is not meant doing a good deed every now and then. It is about what characterizes the new life, what is the practice of the new life. The new life practices righteousness and nothing else. Practicing righteousness is doing what is right to God and is manifested in your thinking, speaking and acting.

Here also it is not about living up to it for the full hundred percent in your life, but it is about what belongs to the new life, the nature of God. Practicing righteousness is only to be found with someone who is born of God. It is living as the Lord Jesus is.

Now read 1 John 2:25-29 again.

Reflection: What is the meaning of the anointing that you have received?

## 1 John 3

### **1Jn 3:1-3 | Children of God**

*1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and [such] we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope [fixed] on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

V1. In chapter 3 John continues describing the characteristics of the new life by which you can identify the children of God. Before he goes on with that it seems like he is overwhelmed by the thought that we have become children of God. Does that ever happen to you, that it suddenly dawns on you how wonderful it is that you are a child of God? If you think about it like that, it can deeply touch you. That you are a child of God is a gift of the love of the Father! The Father expresses His love to you by calling you His child. He openly declares that you are His. You could never and would never have thought of that yourself. The fact that you definitely are a child of God, can overwhelm you with feelings of gratitude and admiration. You are really a child of God!

I address you as a child of God, in order to bring the message closer to you. Nevertheless it is right to point out that John speaks always about “children of God”, in plural. You are a child of God together with others who also are. Together with them you form the family of God. You belong to a company that is not known by the world. It doesn’t mean that the world would not know who you are, but that the world does not recognize you as someone who belongs to its company. That is because the world did not know the Lord Jesus. Since you belong to Him, the world doesn’t know you either.

However, that notably applies not only if you are faithful to the Lord and go your way separated from the world. It also applies if you – which is hoped not to be – would become unfaithful. You see that with Lot, who

I believe is the most unfaithful believer that you meet in the Scripture. When he makes a disgusting proposal to his wicked fellow citizens whom he even called 'my brethren', to stop them from committing a disgusting deed, they refer to him by calling him 'a resident alien' or one who 'came to sojourn' (Gen 19:4-9). But also Peter, who has found himself in the company of enemies of the Lord Jesus, is being recognized as a person who does not belong there, but that he belongs to the Lord (Mt 26:69-75).

V2. Once again John speaks out the assurance of the fact that we are children of God. He emphasizes that it is indeed "now" already. By addressing them as "beloved" he underlines their common blessing. He loves them, and the Father and the Son love them even more. It is a love that is enjoyed in the family circle of God. That's something the world does not know anything about or has any insight in.

That will change when the Lord Jesus "appears". Then the world will recognize that He has loved us (Jn 17:22-23). That recognition is, because "we will be like Him". When the world will see us then, they will see Him. And that we will be like Him, is because we then "see Him just as He is".

To be able to see Him just as He is, it is necessary for us to be like Him. When we are like Him, the result will be that we will radiate His glory. Beholding Him will cause that transformation (2Cor 3:18).

V3. This hope that we have in Him, to see Him, can have nothing else than a purifying effect. If you think of Him and look forward to Him, you will definitely want to be pure "just as He is pure". You will inwardly sense that certain things cannot go hand in hand with the coming meeting with Him. Therefore, you will remove all those things from your life. By doing so, you are already rejoicing His heart.

Now read 1 John 3:1-3 again.

Reflection: What effect does the thinking about the coming meeting with the Lord have on you?

### 1Jn 3:4-12 | Practice Righteousness and Brotherly Love

*4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. 11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, [who] was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.*

V4. John speaks about practicing “sin” and “lawlessness”. That forms a great contrast with the hope in Him and the purifying that results from it, which you have read in the previous verses. Due to that contrast you feel the power of his argument. Purifying and practicing sin belong to two different worlds. He is talking about “everyone who practices sin”. That is not someone who once in a while commits a sin, but someone who practices sin as a way of life. He is doing it all the time, practicing sin is the nature of his life. In such a person nothing of God is present. A believer can sin indeed, but as an incident. He does not live in sin; it is not his daily practice.

If a person has sin as a life principle, he is lawless. To be lawless means that he doesn't consider any authority at all. His unbridled will is his only driving force. He does not matter about God at all. On the contrary, he lives in rebellion against Him (Job 15:25). Therefore lawlessness goes much further than violation of the law of God. If lawlessness were limited to transgression of the law, sin would be limited to the period of the law. But also before there was the law, there was sin in the world (Rom 5:13a).

V5. There has been one Man, Who has never sinned, because there is no sin in Him. That is the Lord Jesus. He appeared – that is when He came to the

earth – in order to take away the sins of others. He took away yours and mine and of all God’s children by taking them on Himself at the cross in the three hours of darkness. He was able to do that, precisely because there was and is no sin in Him.

V6. The result is that you abide in Him now, that is, that you have been made one with Him because you have received Him as your life. That is why you do not sin. This is a strong statement of course. You will immediately say that that’s not true, for you know very well that you still do sin. But the point is that you should see yourself as John presents it here. He says that you abide in Him and that implies that he see the same characteristics with you as he sees with the Lord Jesus. That what is typical for the Lord Jesus is now typical for you too.

John sees you in your new nature, regardless of the degree to which your new nature is visible. That is one side of the truth. The other side is that “who sins” has no part in God and Christ at all. No one who sins has seen or known both God and Christ. Such a person has nothing in common with God, how wonderful his confession may be. His confession of a higher knowledge of God and a deep experience with God is a lie.

As far as the practice is concerned, it is certain that you do not sin if you remain in fellowship with the Lord in your daily life, whereby you inquire of His will and obey His Word in everything. Nevertheless, that is not the issue here. It is not about two kinds of believers, faithful ones and unfaithful ones, but about two sources out of which they live. The source out of which the believer lives is a totally different one than the source out of which the unbeliever lives. That is what John is talking about.

V7. John is addressing his spiritual “little children” and is warning them for the deceivers. Deceivers want to sow doubt about Christ and His work and even deny it. They seek to make you uncertain about the characteristics of the children of God. Do not let yourself be influenced by them, but hold on to the clear statements of God’s Word. Do not depend on your feelings. Of course they have their place, but they are not a basis for knowing the truth of God.

You are a child of God and you have the same nature as God and the Lord Jesus. If He, that is Christ, is righteous, then you too are. Jesus Christ is the Righteous, He has laid down His life for you and you abide in Him. He is the absolute measure. If you see a person who practices righteousness, which means who does what is right according to God, you see someone who does what the Lord Jesus is. Such a person is therefore also righteous.

V8. The opposite of practicing righteousness is practicing sin. In someone who practices sin you recognize the devil. The origin of sin is in the devil. The devil sins from the beginning of his existence as devil. He is the father of sin. He who sins, exposes the characteristics of that father (Jn 8:44). The devil cannot do anything else than sin; it is his nature and he cannot do anything else but act accordingly. From the beginning he has men under his control through sin. Each man who is under his control, sins as he does. Therefore no man is able to escape from the control of the devil or to liberate another man from his control.

But the devil does not have the last word and he is not the victor. The victory belongs to the Son of God. What John says about Him, sounds like a victory call: "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." Every time that somewhere on earth someone comes to conversion, a work of the devil is being destroyed. You who believe are a proof of that. That's the reason why the Son of God came to earth and finished the work on the cross.

V9. The opposite of 'being of the devil' and 'practicing sin' is 'born of God' and 'not practicing sin'. "Who is born of God" has life that has its origin in God. That life comes in someone without any contribution of himself. That life has its own characteristics. These characteristics are typical for the seed of God. What comes out of a seed corresponds to that seed (cf. 1Cor 15:38). Sin is totally alien to the seed of God. From that seed no sin is produced; it does not cause anyone to commit sin and it cannot sin, just as in Him, the Lord Jesus, there is no sin. He could not possibly sin. He is absolutely separated from sin (Heb 4:15; 7:26).

If you are born of God, it is the work of God's Word and God's Spirit (Jn 3:5). That is the seed John is talking about here (1Pet 1:23). The seed is the new life principle that God has planted in you. To plant that seed, God's

Word was preached and it came to and in you through the power of the Holy Spirit. In that way you were inwardly purified and the new life has come in you, where it develops and grows (cf. Jam 1:18,21).

V10. Someone belongs to the children of God or to the children of the devil. Here you see two families opposite to each other. These two families make up all of humanity. Both families have their own typical family characteristics. John indicates what is not present with the children of God. If you notice that someone is lacking the practice of righteousness and also brotherly love, then it is obvious that you are not dealing with a child of God but with a child of the devil. Children of the devil have no new life and are therefore in no way able to practice righteousness and to love the brothers.

Practicing righteousness and brotherly love are two separate characteristics of the new life, but they belong together. They cannot even do without each other. Here you see the characteristics of the essence of God of Whom John says that He is light and love. Wherever righteousness and brotherly love are not present, nothing of God present, but the devil is manifested.

V11. To this statement John attaches the message "that we should love one another". You have heard this message from the beginning. Nothing else has ever been told to you. In the Old Testament there was the command to love your neighbor. That raised the question of who then was the neighbor. To the Israelite it was his compatriot. The Gentiles were hated as a whole. The Israelites were not supposed to love them, but they had to eliminate them. In the New Testament you find a new order of things. There you come across the term 'brothers'. In this term, a special dignity resounds.

The Lord Jesus speaks about His own as "My sheep" and "My friends" (Jn 10:27; 15:14), but only in John 20 He speaks about "My brothers" for the first time (Jn 20:17). He does that after He has risen. He calls His disciples like that in His message which He by Mary Magdalene conveyed to them. In that way He puts them on the level before His Father and His God that He Himself has. His Father has become their Father too and His God is now their God. That is something totally new. It is no longer about 'the neighbor' of an earthly people, but there is mention of a new, heavenly company: the family of God.

V12. As an example of a lack of brotherly love and what that leads to, John quotes, as an exception, a history from the Old Testament. He refers to Cain. That man had no brotherly love, but “was of the evil one”. He revealed that too by killing his brother. His brother is Abel. John doesn’t mention that name because he wants to fully emphasize that he killed his *brother*. That deed was one of his evil works, while the works of his brother were righteous. He who is of the evil one, practices evil works. By also mentioning the works of his brother, which were righteous, John shows that Cain was driven by hatred.

In the New Testament you read three times about Cain: about the *sacrifice* of Cain (Heb 11:4), the *works* of Cain (here) and the *way* of Cain (Jude 1:11):

1. His *sacrifice* shows his self-willed religiosity, his indifference toward God’s holiness.
2. His *works* show his anger, the lack of brotherly love.
3. His *way* shows that he turned his back on God.

That is how it went from bad to worse with Cain. That is the result if someone who has no life from God, is confronted with righteous works. That confrontation shows the lack of these works.

Now read 1 John 3:4-12 again.

Reflection: What characteristics do you see with someone who is of God and what characteristics do you see with someone who is of the devil?

**1Jn 3:13-18 | The Practice of Love**

*13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

V13. In verse 12 you have seen what Cain did to his brother. Just like Cain dealt with his brother, the world deals with you. You are someone who is born of God. That's why the life of God is within you and becomes visible. That stirs up the hatred of the world, for it feels condemned thereby. Even if you do not say anything, your whole life is a testimony against the world that does not consider God. The world doesn't want to have anything to do with God, but because of you it cannot avoid Him. You are going through the same experience as Abel and also as the Lord Jesus. The hatred mainly comes from the religious world. Cain was a religious person when he murdered his brother. The Lord Jesus was murdered by the religious leaders of His people.

The world where you will experience intolerance and hatred the most is the religious world where nominal Christians are in control. You may probably be surprised if that happens. You do not need to, John says here (cf. Rev 17:6-7), because you belong to a company he addresses here for the only time in his letter as "brethren", with which he means both brothers and sisters. This name radiates the warmth of the family relation in contrast to the cold hatred of the world.

V14. Because of this family relationship and the appreciation of it you know that you have passed out of death into life. You love your brothers. That love may be put to the test at times and you may feel more affection for the one than for the other person but that love is certainly there. If you consider that the Lord Jesus has died for you as well as for your brother and that your brother also loves the Lord Jesus, then there is that 'match'.

You are on the territory of life and not on the territory of death anymore. Brotherly love belongs to life and not to death. On the territory of death, death is in control; people are murdered there. On the territory of life there is a sphere of life and you are surrounded by the sphere of love.

“He who does not love” has no part in that, but “abides in death”. Needless to say that here it is about someone who uses the word ‘brother’, but has no new life. Such a person lives in death, abides in death, the sphere and aroma of death is around him. However, he is not only surrounded by death, but death characterizes him, it is also within him.

V15. Someone who does not love his brother and who abides in death is also someone who hates his brother. He looks at his brother with eyes full of lethal hatred. His mind is that of a “murderer”. He does not seek the life of his brother, but he seeks his death. You know that such a person has no eternal life abiding in him. He never had, it is totally absent with him. False teachers do not seek to nourish the new life but they seek to poison the faith of God’s children with false teachings.

V16. With love it is totally different. Love does not seek death for the brethren but life. Love even goes that far that it even enters death to give life to others. Love is something you are to know first yourself in order to be able to love others. The only way to learn to know love is by receiving it. You are not able to love if you yourself have not received love, if another person has not shown love to you first. You have learnt to know love through the Son of God, by what He did for you on the cross (Gal 2:20). He has laid down His life for you.

An example. If you see that someone is almost drowning and another person rescues him, but in the course of rescuing him the rescuer himself drowned, you see love. However, that is love at a distance. You observe it, but you are not involved. If you, however, are almost drowning and a person rescues you at the cost of his own life, then you personally experience what love is.

The Lord Jesus has laid down His life for you. That is the highest expression of love. There is no greater proof of love possible (Jn 15:13). And what is the result of that deed of love? Life. Do you see the full contrast to what

motivates Cain and the world and what is inspiring the false teachers? Their inspirer is the devil. The devil lives in the sphere of death and breathes hatred in his instruments to murder as many people as he possibly can. With Christ belongs life; He is the center of the territory of life.

Christ was killed by murderers. Yet that is not how it is presented here. Here it is said that He “laid down” His life. It is a deed of Himself. He gave His life. That is the highest and absolute proof of love that someone has for another. He is love, His nature, His Being, is love and you have experienced that love, for He had mercy on you. At the same time that is the measure for your love toward your brothers and sisters. If He is your life, then it works in you in the same way as it works in Him. Then you ought to lay down your life for your brothers and sisters as well. That goes very far, isn't it?

V17. But do you think that it will really be expected of you in practice to lay down your life for a brother or sister? As far as I am concerned I assume that there is quite a little chance for that to happen, almost out of the question. It also seems that John takes that into consideration. Therefore he gives another test from which you can show what you are prepared to do for your brother or sister. You may not literally give your life for your brother or sister, but you surely can put your life at their disposal, you can commit yourself to them (1Cor 16:15; 1Thes 2:8). How do you do that?

Well, you have this world's goods. You see your brother or sister is suffering want. The question is how you respond to that. He who has no life of God, in whom the love of God does not abide, closes his heart to it. In case there is life of God, if the love of God indeed abides in you, then you will surely respond in a totally different way. There will be a desire to provide for that want, for that lack, with the world's goods you have.

Notice that the brother or sister doesn't ask for help, but that love will notice and observe the want. Love acts without being requested for any help. It is also remarkable that the expression for “world's goods” literally is ‘the livelihood of the world’. As long as we are in this world we need a livelihood and we ought to share that with others who are in need of it. James tells his readers that he who says he has faith, must show that by giving where there is lack (Jam 2:15). John takes the possession of the new,

eternal life as a starting point. Here you see that the most exalted truths have their effect in the most daily circumstances.

In these truths the rules of the people of Israel toward the poor and rich Israelites are also an illustration for us (Deu 15:7-11). If there were poor Israelites, it was a test for the neighbor's love of the rich Israelites. There was no possibility to look for excuses to escape from the obligation to give to the poor neighbor. A hardened heart kept his hand shut. He who had a hardened heart showed that he did not trust God for the promise of blessing He made. In the language of John we may say that in such a person the love of God did not abide. There was no love for God and no love for the neighbor.

V18. To love is not a matter of only words or of talking about it in general terms. Of course true love may become apparent from words. You can prove your love to others by what you say. However, John says this with a view to the false teachers who do have sweet talks, but without any real care for the believers. They close their heart for others and seek to obtain other people's properties. They also want to subject them to themselves (cf. Gal 2:4-5). In this light you should see this appeal not to love "with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth".

Loving is a matter of deed and must be done in truth. Truth is not the doctrine here, but has to do with truth in the innermost being (Psa 51:6). The point is that love is true and sincere. One should not give on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis. If you give from the thought to get better off, you lack sincerity.

Getting better off from something can be both material and spiritual. You also may for instance give something to another person or do something for him, in order to get all the credits for it. Then also you can hardly speak of a sincere love. Even a feeling of self-satisfaction is inappropriate. That's giving to the poor – says, that you should not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Mt 6:3).

If the new life is working you will love in deed and in truth without thinking of yourself. We are to learn that in practice. We can only learn that from the Lord Jesus. He gave fully and selflessly, without thinking of Himself.

Now read 1 John 3:13-18 again.

Reflection: How do you practice your love for your brother and sister?

**1Jn 3:19-24 | Confidence Before God**

*19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him 20 in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. 23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. 24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*

V19. In the previous verses you have read about the proofs of brotherly love. John now remarks that if you not only speak about brotherly love, but also show it, it confirms that you are “of the truth”. To be of the truth means that you are born of God. You may probably notice that the proofs are weak and that you must improve in your practice of giving, but the important thing is that it is present. As you know, the important thing for John is the new life. If that is present, it works that way. He does not speak about the extent in which it becomes visible, but about the fact that it becomes visible.

If it becomes visible in your life you can assure your heart or your conscience in the presence of God that everything is okay. This is not an excuse for possible failures, but it is the comfort for an anxious soul that may start to doubt because of the failures.

V20. If you speak about brotherly love you will surely, just like me, immediately notice in your conscience that you pretty much fall short of that. You may even catch yourself faking it in a certain case, while not feeling the real brotherly love at that moment. If that’s the case, if your heart condemns you, then you may remember that God is greater than your heart and that He knows all things. All those times that you did not show brotherly love may lead you to the question whether you truly are a Christian. It is after all a characteristic of the new life that you love your brothers, isn’t it? Nevertheless you may assure your heart that everything is alright and that God is greater and knows everything.

He knows you completely. He knows what is in you. You may say: 'You know all things, You know that I love You, even though I sometimes fail to show it' (Jn 21:17). You can entrust yourself to His judgment and that is a lot better than that of people and of yourself (1Cor 4:3-4).

V21. If your heart has found rest in that and it doesn't condemn you, it will have a great impact on your relationship with God. Earlier you must have felt some doubt to draw near to God because you looked at yourself and your practice too much. It is dangerous to constantly look at yourself. Then you continue to live between hope and fear, for your practice will always show lacks. Therefore it is important to listen to the message of John, what he says about the new, eternal life.

It is also dangerous never to look at yourself. Once you have eternal life, it does not mean that you can live your life recklessly. You wouldn't even want that, of course. You'll be aware of the fact that sin is still in you and that you still do sin. John said that also at the beginning of this letter (1Jn 1:8,10).

The important thing is that you have received a new starting point for your life. That starting point is not your practice, but your new life. If you know that God sees you in your new life, and if you, as far as you are aware of that, don't do wrong things nor that there are things that you still have to confess, you can rejoice in a relationship of confidence with God.

"Have confidence" is an impressive word. It is a great privilege to have confidence toward God. You have obtained access to God (Eph 2:18) and now you are at home with Him. You feel comfortable with Him and you may tell Him whatever you have on your mind. That goes together with your relationship to Him as a child. Everything in your relationship with Him is all peace (Rom 5:1). You may make known to Him all that you desire (Phil 4:6). There is never a thought with Him that you are too much for Him or that you are boring Him with your questions. It is a confidence that is perfect because He is perfect.

This also precisely fits to the theme of the writings of John, which concerns the fellowship with the Father and the Son. Here he speaks about an un-

disturbed relationship of love between the children of God and the Father. He describes the family atmosphere.

V22. In that sphere, in which children feel themselves at home, in which they know to be accepted, they ask the Father for things they need. They know that the Father loves to give them the things that they ask for because they know the desires of the Father. The Father also loves to give them those things because the children do the things that are pleasing in His sight. If He looks at them and sees that they “keep His commandments” and in that way “do the things that are pleasing in His sight”, they please His heart. They are a joy for Him. The children are free to tell Him everything that they have on their mind and the Father is free to give them everything He has on His mind for them. This situation is one of harmony, of pleasure.

If you have read these things I can imagine that you think: ‘I’m not familiar with this kind of praying. Only asking what the Father loves to give me? Knowing that I will get what I’ve asked for, because I keep His commandments and do what is pleasing to Him? There is no way I can do that.’ In this context it is good to know that there are several forms of praying.

You read about a way of praying for which we do not even know how to find the right words. Those are the “groanings too deep for words” (Rom 8:26), whereby the Holy Spirit puts our feelings into words that we cannot put into words. The relief of this form of praying is that you know that God makes all things work together for good to those who love Him (Rom 8:26-28).

The second form is to let your requests be made known to God. You may not know whether you pray for the right things, but you may surely tell it all to Him. The relief that this form of praying gives, is the peace of God that fills your heart and mind with the awareness that He knows what is good for you (Phil 4:6-7).

You have the third form here. This form comes from the rest that you have in and of God, while also a condition is attached to it. However, it is not a condition whereby you are to do something, but a condition you already fulfill. You can derive that from the word “because”. It is not said that you

receive from Him *if* you keep His commandments, but *because* you keep His commandments, by which you do what is pleasing to Him.

V23. What commandments are we talking about here? About His commandment to “believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ”, to which directly is linked the commandment that we are to “love one another”. That means that it is all about ‘faith’ and ‘brotherly love’. You have already seen that those aspects are present with you. And that helps to make it more comprehensible.

To obtain the full benefit of praying, it is important that you feel at home with God and that you live in fellowship with Him. The only way to get to know Him and what His will is, is examining His Word in fellowship with Him. That will strengthen your faith confidence and make you familiar with His desires. That will also cause you to ask Him for that in a childlike faith. He bestows you what He wants to give you, but He loves to do that as an answer to your prayer.

It is about, not *if*, but *that* you keep His commandments. When you read what those commandments are, it turns out to be one commandment consisting of two aspects. The first aspect of the commandment is to “believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ”. You may call it the vertical aspect of the commandment. Believing has got to do with heeding, listening to Him on Whom your faith is focused. Directly connected to that is the aspect “to love one another”. You may call this second aspect the horizontal aspect of the commandment. You cannot separate loving one another from believing in God’s Son.

The core of Christendom is love, but indeed God’s love. It is not true that everything that people call love is from God and that everywhere where love is God is too and we therefore would be dealing with Christians. ‘Love is God’ is a misleading, horrible saying. No, men can only truly love one another with the love of God if they believe in the Son of God. The commandment to love one another comes from Him. It was not imposed on you to prove that you keep the law and that you want to earn life, but it is to prove that you have eternal life.

V24. Keeping His commandments shows that you abide in Him and that He abides in you. Keeping them is not only about knowing them, being acquainted with them or being able to enumerate them. It is also not even just doing what is said. Keeping the commandments means that you meditate on them because it is your joy to think about them. God loves to see that you practice His commandments with a heart that desires to do His will. It was so with the Lord Jesus during His life on earth (Psa 119:47,35). That also goes for the new life you have, for He is that new life. It also goes for the law of the ten commandments, but that law is absorbed in the much more comprehensive and more profound commandment of the will of the Father.

As an extra assurance that He abides in you, John is saying to you that God has also given you His Spirit. You know that you have received Him, don't you (Eph 1:13)? Well, that underlines that you have new life. The Spirit Who is in you, convinces you that the Lord Jesus is the eternal life in you. Isn't that an amazing affirmation from God?

Now read 1 John 3:19-24 again.

Reflection: What about your confidence toward God? What do you ask Him?

## 1 John 4

### **1Jn 4:1-6 | God's Spirit and the Spirit of the Antichrist**

*1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the [spirit] of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak [as] from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

V1. In the last verse of the previous chapter John has already highlighted the fact that you have the Holy Spirit (1Jn 3:24). There he mentions Him as an emphasis of the assurance that God abides in you. In the section you now have before you he will contrast the work of God's Spirit with the work of the spirit of the antichrist.

You can discern what comes from God's Spirit and what comes from the spirit of the antichrist by asking for the confession of Jesus Christ. That is the first touchstone. There is another touchstone in this section. That is the question about whom the audience is for the message of a person who presents himself as a teacher (verse 6). There is mention of a company of listeners that consists of those who are from God and a company of those who are from the world. Those who are from God, listen to the apostles; those who are from the world, listen to the spirit of the antichrist.

John starts with addressing you as 'beloved'. That is a wonderful starting point for the old apostle. It expresses his care for you. Out of that care he wants to warn you not to accept all kinds of nice talks about God and His Son as if those words automatically come from God. You may think that it is alright as soon as you hear someone talk about God and Jesus. That is

certainly not alright. You ought to test the spirits and you ought to know from which source they speak.

There are examples in the Bible which show that sometimes unbelievers have prophesied through the Spirit of God, such as Balaam (Num 24:2). What he then said (Numbers 23-24) came from the good source. When he counseled the people against the Word of God to commit harlotry, he spoke from an evil source (Num 25:1; 31:16).

It is not said that you should test people to know whether they are believers or if they hold the right doctrine, but it is about testing spirits. It is not about an orthodox confession, but about the question from which source people speak. Is the source the Holy Spirit or is it a demonic spirit? That is the question here. It is about unmasking people who present themselves as prophets and claim to come up with a message from God, while in reality they bring lie and therefore speak through a demonic spirit.

It is about spirits that imitate the work of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of islam, for example, is clearly a demonic spirit and not an imitation spirit. The case with the false prophets who went out, is different. They imitate the Spirit of God, behind which of course a demonic spirit is hidden. That they "have gone out", indicates an activity. Activity always impress people. What also is impressive, is that they are with many. You may have an idea about that kind of influence. If many people claim something, it impresses more than if an individual says it.

V2. The touchstone is the way people think about the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit only reveals what serves to the glorification of the Lord Jesus and He does that with joy. Satan and his angels are doing the reverse. They talk nicely, but there is nothing that glorifies Him. On the contrary, they seek to dishonor Him. It is not only about historical salvation facts, but also about facts related with the Person of Christ. He is to be confessed as the Word that truly became flesh (Jn 1:14).

He has not put on the form of blood and flesh temporarily. That He "has come in the flesh" means that He became Man. The fact that He is Man means that from the moment He became that it was indissolubly connected to His Person. He truly became Man and He will be that forever. If He would not be Man anymore now, then that means that He had never been truly Man.

That He “has come in the flesh”, implies by definition that He has always existed as God. A person can only come in the flesh when He has a preexistence as God. He has eternally existed as the eternal Son. The confession that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is therefore also a confession of the eternal Godhead of the Lord Jesus.

V3. When you talk about the Lord Jesus with someone and no clear confession about Him comes out of his mouth, then it is not right. Such a person is not from God, that is, he is not born of God (1Jn 3:9-10). Not being able to make this confession means that such a person has not been born again.

Someone who is born of God and therefore has new life, loves the Lord Jesus. That will also be noticeable. Saying that you love Him without showing anything of it, is telling a lie. It is about the confession of ‘Jesus’. Where you meet new life, there will be no need for an extensive explanation of Him. Family members immediately recognize one another.

The spirit of the antichrist does not confess Jesus as having come in the flesh. It is not only about what this spirit says, but also about the coming and performing of this spirit (2Thes 2:3). It is someone who does not confess Jesus and also does not consider God in any other way. The antichrist is the man in whom sin is present in its fullness. The antichrist as a person is still to come, but his spirit is now already in the world. That spirit is not from God, but comes from satan.

V4. What should you do if you notice that you are dealing with such a spirit? You do not have to do anything. You may know something and that is that you have overcome that spirit. You have not overcome him by winning a discussion. You should not even start a discussion, for then you will be defeated. Eve went into a conversation with the devil and she was the loser. You do not need to know and rebuke all arguments of the adversaries. You should simply stick to what you have been taught from the beginning, which is to the truth that was announced to you by the apostles.

You are born of God and you may see yourself in the position of overcomer because you have the Holy Spirit in you through faith in the Name of the Son of God. So you don’t need to ask who is greater, the Spirit Who is in you or the spirit who is in the world. Therefore you should not let yourself be impressed by the parade of spirits who try to fool you by saying that you are a follower of a pitiable faith and that they can tell you about higher

forms of truth. Hold on to the faith that you have heard from the beginning. Then you behave as an overcomer and the enemy gives way (1Jn 5:4).

V5. The followers and proclaimers of the false doctrine “are from the world”. That’s their origin and there they are at home. Everything that comes from them is what they are and where they belong. That finds connection with all who belong to the world and not with believers. The world is under the power of satan and he rules it. From that evil system, he sends his demons to spread their pernicious teachings. What they bring perfectly connects with the people who belong to the world. These people listen to them because they speak the same language as the people of the world.

V6. You do not belong to the world anymore. That’s why you do not listen to them. Because you know God you listen to the apostles, for they “are from God”. It is about a radical contrast, the contrast between truth and error. There is no connection between those two. Therefore there is also no connection between those who are of God and those who are not of God. The unbeliever doesn’t understand anything from what you as a child of God receive with love. He doesn’t listen to it.

You can also apply the words “listens to us” in a broader sense than to the apostles alone. You may apply them to all who proclaim the Word of God. Then it is about the word of the apostles, in other words the inspired Word of God. Then you’ll love to listen to teachers who explain God’s Word to you and edify you in your faith. They do not point to themselves and they also do not try to win you for their ideas, but they point to Christ. If you hear them, it will find connection in your heart, because the Spirit dwells in there.

That will only happen if the words that you hear are in accordance with the Scripture. Thereby it doesn’t matter by whom they are spoken, whether it is a well-known preacher or a totally unknown believer. The touch stone is God’s Word, the written Word. If that is spoken under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you listen to it.

Now read 1 John 4:1-6 again.

Reflection: How do you know from what spirit something comes?

### 1Jn 4:7-14 | God Is Love

*7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son [to be] the Savior of the world.*

V7. After the warning teaching with regard to evil spirits in the previous verses, John again focuses on the nature of God, which you have received as a child of God. He again starts with addressing you with 'beloved'. In that way John wants to make you feel that he loves you, for you also have, like he does, the Lord Jesus as your life. By that he also means to say that you are a 'beloved' of God. God Himself loves you.

The fact that you have the nature of God has to become visible, for love in itself cannot be seen. The love you have for the other "is from God". That love is from God does not mean that each form of love comes from God. From the context it appears that it is about Divine love. In God's Word you also read about the love of man, which he received from his Creator. That's called 'natural love'. By this is meant, for example, the love of parents for their children and vice versa. That love is also given by God, but that love can cool down. It goes without saying that by natural love God has never meant a wrong love, such as homosexual love. That is unnatural love (Rom 1:26-27).

Divine love can never cool down. That love is not dependent on the response of the person to whom it is expressed. That love is in you and is proof that you are born of God and that you know God. You see how love is connected to its origin and the knowledge of it. To live, by being born of God, and to know the One Whom you are born of, belong together.

Through the new birth you have a relationship with Him. You know to Whom you belong, you know Him.

V8. A person with whom the Divine love is missing, has no relationship with God. Such a person has never even known God; there has never been a relationship with Him ever. However wonderfully a person might speak about Him, he is a fraud and a deceiver. Not knowing God means that there is no fellowship with God. The verb 'to know' in the Bible has the meaning of 'having fellowship with'. The meaning of 'knowing' is beautifully expressed in Genesis 4:1 where you read: "And Adam knew Eve his wife" (NKJV). Fellowship is a matter of the deepest intimacy. Therefore it speaks volumes when John relates 'love' with 'knowing' God, because God is love.

True love comes from God "for God is love". Only when there is Divine love there will be love for one another, a love that comes from the fellowship with God. When we speak about God as love and that His love is in us and through that love we therefore are able to love, you can compare it with a sea. When it says here: 'God is love', then you, as it were, stand at the seashore. That He lives in you as love, you can compare with a bucket that is filled with water from the sea. When you let a bucket sink in the sea you can say that the sea is in the bucket. That's how it is with your heart which is sunk in the love of God. You should ponder on it for a moment and you will be overwhelmed.

V9. God has given a great proof of the fact that He is love. Love is invisible and must be revealed. God dwells in unapproachable light (1Tim 6:16). We would have never known anything of Him had He not revealed Himself. But He made His love visible by giving "His only begotten Son", or better said, as it is written, by sending "His only begotten Son into the world".

We would have never known God if He had not done this. We would have never known anything of the mystery in God regarding the mutual love between the Father and the Son. John speaks about the 'only begotten Son'. That does not mean that He only became Son by His birth. He has always been the only begotten Son. 'Only begotten' means unique, the only one of His kind. As such the Father has sent Him and as such He came.

You read that that love “was manifested toward us” (NKJV). That implies that the proof of God’s love is completely outside you. False teachers also speak about love, but then as a mystical experience to learn to know God in that way. To succeed you must turn into yourself and follow your own feelings. That’s of course not the way. ‘Toward’ you means that it indeed is outside you, but it also means that you were allowed to perceive, acknowledge and accept that manifestation. That’s how you received life.

V10. You had no life, for you were dead in your trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). Because you were dead it was impossible to love God. Besides that you were dead you were also guilty because you did not love God. That’s why you needed reconciliation. God also provided with that. A propitiation was needed to meet the holiness and righteousness of God.

There was no love for God with you and me. Everything in God’s love came from Him. His heart went out to you because He also wanted you to partake of a company of people whom He loves to bring into His presence, to His heart. He removed everything that stood in the way by sending His Son as “a propitiation for our sins”, which also includes your sins. Herein you see the great price He was willing to pay.

That God is love ought not to be lowered to the level of ‘God can love’, as if there are moments that He does not love. God’s love became evident on the cross of Calvary. That’s the way for you to know what love is. The measure is that love has given Himself for sins He Himself did not commit.

V11. John concludes now that if God has loved us in such an exalted and impressive way, it cannot be otherwise than that we love one another too. In that way we make visible that God is love.

V12. Nobody has ever seen God, but God’s love has become visible by His Son Whom He sent into the world (Jn 1:18). However, His Son is not on earth anymore, but the family of God is. This family has the Son as their life. What the Son first did when He was on earth, ought to be done now by the family of God. And how can the family of God make possible that God is seen? By loving one another!

The public testimony of Whom God is, is given when there is love among the believers, among those who have the nature of God. From your love

toward your brother and sister it becomes apparent that God abides in you and that His love in you is perfect. That means that His love in you is fully expressed if you love your brother and sister. All your actions toward your brother and sister are then in fact God's actions. The love for the other comes to its full right and purpose in you.

If God, Who is the source of love, abides in you – and He does! –, then love doesn't work differently in you than it does in Him, Who is the source of it. Wherever the love of God is being expressed from that source, it can only happen in the perfection which is typical to that source.

You may know it in the meantime, but I still want to remind you of the fact that John presents things in their essence and not after to the poor practice we sometimes show. That must not cause you to become blind to the wrong things, but that is not the point here. You are seen here in connection with the propitiation through which your sins have been taken away. God sees you without sins and that's the way you should look at yourself and others too.

V13. In case you may wonder how you could know that God abides in you and that you abide in Him, John gives another assurance. Indeed, you may know this by the fact that God "has given" you "of His Spirit". As a result, you already participate now in the same atmosphere of fellowship that you will soon enjoy in the Father's house. "Of His Spirit" implies that the fullness of the enjoyment is still to come in the house of the Father. The Spirit has been given to you because only the Spirit knows what is in God (1Cor 2:11). You have the knowledge of the truth – that you abide in God and He in you – not from yourself or someone else, but from God's Spirit. Through the Spirit you share with God what is His.

V14. The Spirit gives you the inner assurance that you abide in God and that God abides in you. But something more is added that is external, that is, that which is outside of you, but which you see and testify to. You have not seen the Spirit nor do you testify to all kinds of spiritual gifts that you yourself or others would have. What the Spirit has shown you and the power He has given you to testify to, refers to the Son, Who was sent by the Father "[to be] the Savior of the world".

'Seeing' these things and 'testifying' to these things are also wonderful expressions of the new life that you have received. In that way those who are not yet partakers of it, are able to hear about it and if they convert they will also partake of it.

Now read 1 John 4:7-14 again.

Reflection: How did you get to know the love of God and how does that love work in you?

**1Jn 4:15-21 | Perfect Love**

*15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.*

V15. There is another assurance to recognize whether a person abides in God and whether God abides in such a person. That assurance is the confession "that Jesus is the Son of God". This confession is not a profound or inconceivable truth, but it is the confession of each true believer. There is no believer without this confession, regardless of his age. It is a great truth. The humiliated Man Jesus is the Son of God. He was that not only when He was on earth; He still is. He who does not believe that is not a child of God.

God has fellowship with those, who have exactly the same thought about Jesus as He does. Such people feel fully at home with God. That is what God desires. The word 'confess' also indicates that wonderfully. Confessing means 'saying the same' and in this case it implies: saying the same thing as God. You also find that thought in "if we confess our sins" (1Jn 1:9). In that way we declare that God is right about everything He has always said about our sins. You have acknowledged and accepted His thoughts about His Son and about yourself and about the world. If you are aware that you have been far away from God and now have been brought in such a circle of glory, then you will surely ascribe all honor to God.

V16. John speaks with certainty about what he and all believers – "we", this word is put in front and therefore has emphasis – "have come to know and have believed". It is beyond all doubts that false teachers want to cause about it. You can make this statement your own too. You have known and

believed “the love which God has for” you. “Come to know” means that you have realized, and “have believed” means that you have accepted.

Once again that wonderful expression sounds “God is love”. It makes you want to shout it out loud: God is love! You have experienced it, you have been saved by His love. You have seen the manifestation of His love by sending His Son and in the propitiation the Son has become for your sins. Because of that, you have life from God. The Son is your life. That implies that you abide in love and therefore you abide in God and that God abides in you.

V17. That love can be with you, as well as it is with each other believer, not otherwise than “perfected”. If God is love and He abides in you and you in Him, there is no lack in that love. You can note that if you think of “the day of judgment”. Do you think that when that day comes the judgment of God will be different than it is now? Of course not. Therefore you are looking forward to that day with confidence. You do not need to have any fear for the Judge, because you are in the world “as He is”. And how is He? He is in the glory, surrounded by glory, without having anything to do with sin. You know that He has finished the work and that you have Him as your life. As a result, you are as He is, although you are not there yet where He is.

Here it is not about your position in Christ before God. Your position in Christ before God is addressed by Paul in the letters he has written. John shows that the Lord Jesus is with God and in full fellowship with God in a realm and place that harmonize with the love of God. In that place there is no thought that’s related with sin, for it has been completely propitiated. And what He is you are in the world. You are living in a realm where everything is against God, but as far as you are personally concerned you are as He is. There is full fellowship with God, harmony and rest and peace. You have been brought into fellowship with Divine Persons. There is no need for you to fear judgment.

John already spoke twice about confidence. In chapter 2 it is about the confidence at the coming of the Son: how you can then face Him without any hindrance (1Jn 2:28). In chapter 3 it is said that you now already have

confidence in respect to your relation toward God to ask Him in confidence for what you need (1Jn 3:21).

When John for the third time speaks about confidence (boldness), then it is indeed in relation to chapter 2:28, but he now uses the expression “the day of judgment”. In that way he draws your attention to the moment that all things will be exposed in the true light. At this moment, many things may still be unclear or in confusion to you, but on the day of judgment it will become apparent how things are in reality. Then the perfection of the love of God will only become even clearer. The day of judgment has not come yet, but the confidence definitely is here already.

V18. The thought of fear does not belong to confidence, for fear does not go together with love. Love is the full expression of Who God is, and God has no fear at all. Now you know the perfect love and that perfect love is in you, the fear has been cast out. You see that God in His love has removed everything that hindered you to live in fellowship with Him. That life in fellowship with Him is just as perfect on earth as it is in heaven where we will be soon with Him. The circumstances will then be different, but not the new life that you now already have.

It is not imaginable that someone, after everything what John has explained in this letter, would still fear God concerning the eternal punishment. You will without a doubt agree that fear for a judging God has been completely removed because of what you have seen of His love. John uses a powerful word when he says that love ‘casts out’ fear. There is a power in love working that causes fear to lose the fight. He who fears, “is not perfected in love”. He who fears has not comprehended the love of God because he doesn’t partake of it (cf. Mt 25:25,30). Such painful fear for punishment doesn’t fit in the sphere of confidence of love in which God’s children may be.

You may wonder how this is consistent with Peter’s call to fear God (1Pet 1:17). But Peter does not refer to the fear for the eternal judgment, but he refers to the appropriate reverence for Him Who is full of majesty. You will agree with me that this is an aspect that you also must take into consideration. John does not mean to say that you should not have respect for God now. Confidence and respect go together very well.

V19. In this verse John concludes the section about love with a summary: "We love, because He first loved us." Thereby he doesn't say whether it is about our love toward God or our love toward the brothers and sisters. Both aspects should not and cannot be separated. That you are able to love is because He first loved you. He is the source. John does not go into details Who "He" is. It can be the Father and it can be the Son. It doesn't matter. Both the Father and the Son are God and therefore both the Father and the Son are love. The Father has proven that by giving His Son for you and the Son has proven that by giving Himself for you. Therefore it cannot be otherwise than that he who knows this love also love.

V20. Now you have seen what love is up to verse 19, from verse 20 you read about the test of love. Someone may claim to love God, but how can you know whether this is really true? Well, you have discovered again and again in this letter that God's nature is reflected in your brother and sister and that they are in the same relation toward God as you are. He who says that he loves God will love all who have the Son of God as their life. Life expresses itself. What is claimed must be visible in the brotherly love. You cannot see God, but you can see your brother.

The word 'seen' means that you have seen something very well, that you have given full attention to it. This is how the disciples have seen the Lord Jesus (1Jn 1:1), which caused them to learn to know Who the Father is. This is how you also should look at your brother for whom Christ has died.

Someone with whom is hatred instead of love for his brother, while he says to love God, is a liar. As it has been noted more often, such a person is in the Christian company. In that company he calls the others 'brother', but that is a lie. He says of himself that he is a brother, but he is not. Life and love are missing, they are not present in him.

V21. Such a person also does not care about the commandment that the Lord Jesus has given that we should love one another. He does not have love in him nor does he see anything in the other that he finds worth loving. The commandment to love the brother is only possibly to be followed by those who love God because they have known and believed God's love.

Remember that it is a commandment and not a kind request that you can deal with at random. If you love God, you *must* love each brother and sister without exception.

Now read 1 John 4:15-21 again.

Reflection: Why is it that there is no fear in perfect love?

## 1 John 5

### **1Jn 5:1-5 | Love and Overcoming Faith**

*1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the [child] born of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

V1. John gives a new characteristic by which you can know whether someone is born of God: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” Jesus, the humble Man on earth, is the Man of God’s pleasure. It is He in Whom God finds all His joy and in Whom God executes all His plans. Jesus is not a temporary manifestation, but the Son of God Who became Man and Who will always remain Man. At the same time He is no one else than the Son of the living God, the eternal Son of God (Mt 16:16). What He is for the Father He is for everyone who is born of God.

Wherever you find love for God as the one Who has begotten, that is, as the Giver of the new life, you also find love for everyone who is born of Him. If you should ask yourself who your brother is, then that is everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ. That faith is proof that such a person has the same new life that you yourself also have. You and the other person have that new life of Him Who begets. You have the same Father. Your relationship to each believer runs via God, of Whom each believer is born. You cannot love the Father without also loving His children. It strikes God in His heart if you would say that you love Him but hate His children.

Therefore the love for all God’s children is a general principle. That love is there because of the same Father Who is Father of all children of God. You may have heard someone say that all people are children of one Father. Of course that is a gross denial of the fact that all men are sinners and are separated from God because of their sins. Repentance and a new birth are

necessary. Only if there is life from God, only if He has begotten someone, this person is brought in relation to God as his Father.

V2. In this verse John turns it the other way around. In verse 1 he says that you can know that a person loves God when he loves the children of God. In verse 2 he says that you can know that a person loves the children of God when he loves God and keeps His commands. The common love toward the children of God gets a standard here. You may say that the common love toward all children of God is guided by the love toward God and that the love toward God in its turn is determined by being obedient to His Word. In practice this means that you cannot always go the same way of faith with each believer. I will clarify that with an example.

John and William are sent on an errand by their father. Their father also tells them which way they should follow. On their way John says that he has a better and faster way and he proposes to follow that way. But William replies that father has said that they are to follow a certain way and he wants to obey that. He loves his father and trusts that his father has presented them the best way. His love toward his father and also his love toward his brother prevent him to accept the proposal of his brother which makes him remind his brother of what their father has said.

The lesson is clear, I think. Our love toward one another is to be directed by our love toward the Father, a love that appears from obeying His commandments.

V3. It is clear that obeying God's commandments does not exist of keeping laws or rules, but it is a mind. It is asking for His will, His commandments. The commandments of the Father were determining for the Lord Jesus in His life on earth. By that He knew what He should say and speak (Jn 12:49) and what He should do (Jn 14:31). By that He also knew that He had to lay down His life and to take it again (Jn 10:18). He submitted Himself to God and we are to do that too (Jn 15:10). Then the thoughts of God about our brothers and sisters will also become our thoughts about them and therefore we will abide in the love of the Lord Jesus.

John says as a summary that the love of God comes down to keeping His commandments. Directly to that he adds, as an encouragement, that His commandments are not burdensome. Keeping God's commandments,

meaning to keep them in your heart and to live by them, is doing what is pleasing to Him. Still, at times you may experience that it is not quite easy; on the contrary, sometimes it can be hard. How can John say that His commandments are not burdensome? If you for example think about brotherly love, it can be quite difficult and hard to practice.

In what John says you have to consider again the way he presents the things. He speaks about the new life. Do you think that God's commandments are burdensome for the new life, the Divine life? I don't think so. It is the commandments that characterized the life of the Lord Jesus. The commandments and the new life belong together as a fish and water. When you command a fish to swim in water it is not a burdensome order for that animal. The fish will fulfil that command with the greatest pleasure. The saying: to feel like a fish in water, is not for no reason. Likewise, the commandments are carried out through the new life with the greatest joy.

Here you see at the same time the enormous difference between these commandments and the commandments of the Old Testament. The law was a burdensome and even unbearable yoke to Israel (Acts 15:10). The law was given to a people in the flesh, a sinful people, with the command for them to keep them and in that way they could earn life. The difference between law and faith is, that the law says: do this and live, while faith says: live and do this. The law has man as a starting point, but faith has God as a starting point. If you believe, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed (Rom 6:17). You have received a nature that longs to obey. A commandment is not burdensome when it is in accordance to what you want.

V4. After the relationship to God and that to the brethren, now comes the relationship to the world. The relationship to God and the brethren is determined by the new life. That is what causes the connection both between you and God and between you and the brethren. However, if you look at your relationship to the world you see nothing that connects to the new life. There is no common ground. The new life has its own sphere in which the world has absolutely no place. Because of your new life you have your own world, which is the world where the Lord Jesus and the Father are everything.

Your relationship to the world is not only characterized by the absence of any touch point between the whole company you belong to and the world.

That relationship is also characterized by the presence of a state of war. The world wants to exert its wicked influence on you. The great encouragement you are getting now, is that you may know that you belong to the company of victors. And what does that victory consist of? It consists of your faith. To be able to really lead this life of victory, it is important that your faith is also practically focused on Christ as the center of the world of the Father. Be occupied with Him, read about Him, remember Him, speak to Him. Be ceaselessly in the company of victors and listen to what they know of Him.

The whole company of the family of God's children is standing in the world as an overcoming power. The power of their victory is their faith, because faith teaches them to refrain from the hostile world and makes them to focus on the invisible world of the Father. The world is the company of men that has murdered the Lord Jesus; it is the domain of satan. You are living in the midst of that world. That means war. But you possess the life of victory from God with Whom you are by faith in a life connection. As long as you are in the world the war will continue, but you also have a continuous victory. The victory is a steadfast fact through your faith. The devil will never succeed to have any control of the new life that is lived in the power of faith. That is the victory.

V5. The victory over the world by faith is the part of each "who believes that Jesus is the Son of God". At the beginning of this chapter John said that whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God (verse 1). In that way a person becomes a member of the family of God, which also causes him to come into conflict with the world. With a view to overcome the world, John speaks now about believing that Jesus is the Son of God. That emphasizes His Being truly Man on the one hand and on the other hand it emphasizes His eternal Godhead. In these both aspects of His Person, if I may say it this way, the whole mystery of His Person is indicated. He is both as Man and as God the Object of the faith of each child of God.

He who does not believe in Him in this way, doesn't partake of Him. For those who believe in Him in this way, victory is assured.

Now read 1 John 5:1-5 again.

Reflection: Why are the commandments of God not burdensome?

### 1Jn 5:6-13 | God's Testimony Concerning His Son

*6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. 9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. 10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

V6a. Now John expands on the Person Whom he just mentioned 'Jesus, the Son of God' (verse 5). He tells Who He is and he also tells about the work that He has accomplished. He first points to Him as the One Who has come. That refers to His coming on earth and His whole sojourn on earth. By this He fulfilled what He said to God when He came into the world: "Behold, I have come ... to do Your will, o God" (Heb 10:5-7). It proves that He was with the Father and He came into the world.

His whole sojourn on earth was characterized by 'water'. That means that He fully lived through the Word of God (Mt 4:4), of which the water is a picture (Eph 5:26).

V6b. However, He came "not with the water only". His blameless, God glorifying life alone was not enough to bring you salvation. He also came "with the blood". His perfectly devoted life to God had to come to an end by the shedding of His blood. He had to give His blood for your sins. His work on the cross cannot be separated from His life on earth. Without His blood there is no life for us. Jesus Christ has lived through the Word of God and has given His blood.

When Christ died, blood and water came out of His side (Jn 19:34), as a proof that He had truly died. It is also a witness that in that way we were able to receive eternal life. In his Gospel John first speaks about 'blood'

and then about 'water'. You may call that the *historical* order. This is how it happened on the cross. The *blood* is the foundation for *God* to be able to redeem men from their sins. In that way He can give eternal life to men. The *water* puts the cleansing of the sins of the *sinner* by the power of the Word more in the forefront.

Here in his letter John first speaks about 'water' and then about 'blood'. You may call that the *practical* order. This is how you came into contact with it. First the water cleansed you from your sins, for they were a great obstacle between you and God. Then you saw that the blood has removed all your sins before God. Water refers more to what you needed and blood refers more to what was needed for God.

V6c. After the testimony of the water and the blood the testimony of the Spirit follows. "It is the Spirit who testifies" of the Lord Jesus, Who He is and what He has done. Water and blood are metaphorical or symbolic witnesses. They relate to something. The Spirit is not a symbolic but a personal Witness. The Spirit is used as Witness after the witnesses that speak of the life (water) and the dying of the Lord Jesus (blood). He has come as Witness after the Lord Jesus has risen and has been glorified (Jn 7:39). Through the Spirit we learn the meaning of the metaphorical and symbolic witnesses. "The Spirit is the truth." You have found the truth of God through the work of the Spirit of the truth.

V7. Therefore there are three witnesses of which each one has a particular testimony, while they together form a unity in their testimony. None of the three witnesses stands apart from the other witnesses. The Spirit speaks from the Word. The Spirit speaks about the water and the blood out of the Word and therefore you have accepted the perfect and indisputable testimony of these three witnesses. The testimony is absolutely reliable, for "every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (2Cor 13:1).

V8. In this verse John mentions the witnesses again, but now he mentions the Spirit first (cf. verse 6). He does that because the Spirit has caused you to accept the testimony about the Son of God. Because of the work of the Spirit in your heart you have understood and accepted Who the Lord Jesus is and what He has done. The three witnesses "are in agreement" in their

testimony about what you needed to partake of the eternal life which was given to you in the Son. This threefold testimony gives the unmistakable assurance that you have the Son as your life.

V9. John compares “the testimony of God” with “the testimony of men”, by which he most probably means the false teachers in particular. Men may say what they want, but if they do not know the meaning of the water and the blood and therefore also do not have the Spirit, they are liars. There are men who claim that they know how you could come into contact with the Son without the blood. They speak, for example, about Jesus in relation to ‘the water alone’. That means that they present Him as a good person and a model that is worthy of imitation. But they actually do not say a word about Him as the Propitiation that a sinner needs.

You therefore need to listen carefully to the testimony of God, which is greater than the testimony of any man whatsoever. God has testified of His Son when He was baptized in the Jordan and also at His transfiguration on the mountain (Mt 3:17; 17:5). The testimony had sounded, but the sound did not fade away. The testimony resounds in full, undiminished force to this day and will do so for all eternity.

V10. If this is the testimony that the triune God has testified concerning His Son, how could it be that you would want to listen to even one single word that people, who do not have the Spirit, say about the Son? They may be the most educated people with the most respectable names who speak in the most impressive way about Jesus, but still they are blind people and fools. Aside from the fact that their testimony is false, you absolutely do not need it. You have the testimony in yourself. You believe in the Son of God. You have accepted the testimony of God about His Son. You have agreed to that. That’s how you obtained new life. You possess it, it is in you. That new life is complete, it does not need any addition. Of course it must grow, but that is something different than that it would lack something of which the false teachers claim to be able to give it you.

Those false teachers have not believed “in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son”. They simply do not believe what God has said and therefore they have made Him a liar. This is how also today there are many people who call themselves a Christian, but dispute God’s Word.

They explain in their own way what God has said. They think they know better than God and in that way declare Him a liar.

V11. Whatever they may claim, the testimony stands firm and is untouchable from the meanest and crudest attacks. Therefore, you need not be impressed by the fiercest opposition. The content of the testimony is that God has given you eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Therefore it is completely independent from anything from man whatsoever and it is also untouchable for any false doctrine whatsoever.

You may know and also experience that you have been brought into relationship with God through the possession of eternal life that you have received from God. Even though you do not understand everything about eternal life, the point is that you have received it. It is in you. Thereby bear in mind that this life is the life which is "in His Son". He is that true God and eternal life, as it says further on (verse 20). You may compare it with your hand that has life, but only in relation to your body. The life of your hand is the life of the whole human being. If you separate the hand from the body, the life will be out of it. In the same way also a leaf on a tree has life. Thus, eternal life cannot be enjoyed or experienced outside the Son.

V12. Despite whatever anyone may say or claim, the brief and powerful conclusion is: If you have the Son you have the life and everything that is in it. If you do not have the Son, you have nothing and you miss everything that is related to life. The great difference is made by whether you have or do not have the Son of God as your life.

V13. John is about to conclude his letter. As an introduction to his closing words he tells you why he has written all the foregoing. When it comes to the assurance of what has been said, the Bible emphasizes the *written* Word. He has "written", so that you may know with your heart and not only with your understanding that you have eternal life.

You know that you have it because you have seen what eternal life is. You have seen Who Jesus Christ is, that He is the Son of God. You believe in Him, in His Name. His Name is an indication of the full revelation of Who He is. It embraces all radiance and splendor that this Name contains. To know more of it you have to read and explore God's Word. Everything

you discover in it about Him, you will take into your heart with the greatest love and gratitude.

It is like with the people of Israel to whom all blessings of the promised land were given even before they took possession of it. In the book of Deuteronomy Moses presents the rich blessings of the land before the people. But in order to really be able to enjoy those blessings, it was necessary for the people to take possession of it step by step (Jos 1:2-3). This is how you are blessed with all spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3), which you may summarize with what John calls “eternal life” here.

You are in that heavenly land, but you must discover its treasures. You have to put your foot on it in a spiritual sense. Any place you put your foot on, you may call your property, while the whole land is basically given to you. If in that way you discover step by step what all has been given to you in the gift of eternal life, you will also be eager to thank the Father for it (cf. Deu 26:1-2; Jn 4:10,14,23-24).

Now read 1 John 5:6-13 again.

Reflection: What does the testimony consist of that God has testified of His Son and what is the meaning of it?

**1Jn 5:14-21 | Knowledge of Eternal Life**

*14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us [in] whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. 16 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not [leading] to death, he shall ask and [God] will for him give life to those who commit sin not [leading] to death. There is a sin [leading] to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not [leading] to death. 18 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. 19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in [the power of] the evil one. 20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.*

V14. This verse describes a wonderful result of the possession of eternal life that John has spoken about in the previous verse. He who has eternal life also has “confidence”. This confidence or boldness comes to expression in your prayer life, for therein fellowship with the Father and the Son comes to expression. It is the unreserved talking with the Father and the Son about all issues that affect your life, such as children have, who have an unreserved relationship with their father. Confidence also includes trust, assurance and safety. You are familiar with God, you are at home with Him. It all results from the possession and the knowing of eternal life.

If you live like that in His presence, in that sphere of confidence, then you share your desires with Him. Of course He knows all about them already. Therefore it is not about telling Him what He would not know, but it is about the fact that praying means that you consciously have fellowship with Him. The Lord Jesus has prayed continuously. His life was prayer (Psa 109:4b), but He also had specific times for prayer. He always lived in conscious fellowship with God, but He also prayed with a view to specific events. With Him there was no ignorance regarding the answer to His prayers. He did not need to question Himself whether the Father had heard Him, for He knew that the Father always heard Him (Jn 11:42).

V15. With us it is not always like that. Sometimes you do not know how to pray and you also do not know whether you ask for the right thing. Nevertheless, you may pray. You have the confidence to do that. And if you pray for something that is according to His will, He will hear you, that is, that He will answer you, for He always hears you, after all. A nice example of someone who had the certainty of getting the petition she prayed for, is Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She prayed for a son. After she had gained the certainty of prayer, that is, that she had the certainty that her prayer would be answered, she looked different (1Sam 1:17-18).

A practical point for our praying is that we often take too little time for it. That indicates that we do not consider it that important. We need to take time for prayer. If you cease to pray, it means that you will also cease to receive the blessing. Prayer needs time, perseverance and encouragement in the form of an answer. The only way to learn the lessons of prayer is by praying. In that way you, for example, can pray for the sake of the ministry of a brother or sister. If you pray for him or her to receive strength and blessing from God, then you know that it is a prayer according to His will. He wants us to pray for that. And He will surely answer.

V16. A special prayer is the prayer for a brother who commits a sin. If you see a brother committing a sin, you respond – that’s what the apostle presumes – with Christian love. That love is expressed in praying for the brother. The fellowship between him and the Father has been disturbed. He has no more confidence and he cannot enjoy the blessings of that fellowship. Therefore your love will lead you to pray for him in the first place.

If sin has entered someone’s life, also death has entered his life, which implies the absence of the joy of life. The effect of the prayer is that the brother is again placed back in the joy of the life in the company of the family of God’s children, where death and sin do not belong.

Now John makes another distinction in the sin which is committed. He speaks about “a sin not [leading] to death” and about “a sin [leading] to death”. For the first sin it is allowed to pray, for the second one it is not allowed. How are you to distinguish the kind of sin you’re dealing with? That will become clear in interaction with the Lord.

You can be sure that if a believer sins, it is a sin not leading to death. If it is a sin leading to death, it will become clear by, for example, certain circumstances (cf. 1Cor 11:30). It was clear to Peter that Ananias and Sapphira had committed a sin leading to death (Acts 5:1-10). Moses also had committed a sin leading to death, for he was not allowed to enter the land because of his sin. When he asked God if he could still enter the land, he received the answer to speak no more of this matter with Him (Deu 3:25-26). And Jeremiah was told to pray no more for the people. They were deviated that far away from God that it became inevitable to have them taken away into exile (Jer 11:14; 15:1).

It seems that a sin leading to death is a sin that violates the testimony of God in a particular way. Because of that sin the Name of God has been seriously and publicly dishonored. The conduct of one of His own gives the enemies of God an extra motive to blaspheme His Name. Then it can happen that God can no longer maintain such a person as His witness on earth and takes Him away. If that's the case, then there is mention of a sin leading to death.

V17. By putting this emphasis on a sin leading to death, it may seem as if other kinds of sin are not that serious. That would be a tragic mistake. John again explicitly declares that "all unrighteousness" is sin, even if it is often a sin not leading to death. We must be aware that this can only be said in this way because the Lord Jesus went into death for each sin of God's children. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Therefore sin may absolutely not have any room in the life of a child of God. If it happens that he commits a sin he has to confess it as soon as possible. Prayer for one another is a great contribution to this.

V18. John ends his letter with three verses that all three begin with "we know" (verses 18,19,20), with then in the last verse (verse 21) a general warning. With this three times "we know", which implies that you have conscious knowledge, John once more records the clear principles that he has dealt with extensively in his letter.

The first 'we know' concerns the knowledge "that no one who is born of God sins", whatever people may say. You are born of God and in accordance with your new life you have no part in the practice of sin. The new

life cannot sin and does not want anything else than to do the will of God. You are born of God and therefore have His nature. Can God sin? Impossible! In Him there is no sin. Therefore you also cannot sin in your new life. Every believer knows that.

John sees you and addresses you in the new life that you have received because you are born of God. That new life “keeps” you. That life is completely safe and untouchable for the evil. The evil has no point of connection therein, as the Lord Jesus also says of Himself (Jn 14:30). And He is that new life in you. The evil cannot possibly gain his grip on your new nature any more than he could on the Lord Jesus.

V19. Apart from the evil one, you also have to deal with his instrument, which is the world. In his second “we know” John points at the radical separation between those who are of God and the whole world. Therefore here it is not so much about your being born of God, but about God Himself as the One to Whom you belong and with Whom you are connected. You belong to God, while the world belongs to the evil one and is totally surrounded by evil. The whole world, without anything being exempt from it, breathes wickedness and is the means through which the evil is trying to gain his grip on you. Because you know to Whom you belong, you have a sharp eye for what the world is and for your place on the other side of the borderline. You do not want to have anything to do with the world.

V20. The third “we know” focuses your attention on Him Who is the center in God’s world, the Son of God. You know that He has come into the world and “has given us understanding” so that you may know “Him who is true”. Formerly you were darkened in your understanding (Eph 4:18), however intelligent you perhaps are. Now you have the understanding, how little you may be of account in the world. You owe that to the coming of the Son of God. Had He not come, then you would have remained in darkness. But He has come and has opened your understanding (Lk 24:45). You have gained insight in the plans of God and of how He is going to fulfill them. Everything happens through His Son.

You know Him Who is true, that is God as the One Who is true in Himself. In the world the lie rules, but that does not find any point of connection in

the new life. That's because you know Him Who is true and Who always speaks the truth about all things. You do not only know Him, but it is also even said that you are in Him. That is not knowledge at a distance, for you have been brought into the closest connection with Him.

That doesn't imply that you were brought into the Godhead. After that John directly adds in which way you are in Him Who is true and that is because you are in His Son Jesus Christ. In Him Who has come as Man you are in Him Who is true. You were not able to become God, but God indeed was able to become Man and in that way identify you with Him. At the same time He remains to be the One Who became Man, the true God and the eternal life. That places you before the inconceivable wonder of His Person. In this respect the appeal 'Come let us adore Him!' is appropriate.

V21. The last verse is also appropriate in this light. Guard yourselves from idols, that is things or people that demand, ask for or provoke adoration, for all adoration is to be ascribed to the Son alone. John has presented Him as the eternal life to you in this letter. He is the eternal life you have received. You know the Father and Him Whom He has sent. You therefore have been brought into the sphere of the eternal life (Jn 17:3). Spend your time there and be involved with Him Who is the eternal life. Don't let yourself be tempted to spend your time, your attention and adoration to something or someone else. Only the Father and the Son are worthy of adoration, now and forever. Amen.

Now read 1 John 5:14-21 again.

Reflection: What have you learned in this letter about the eternal life?

## Other Publications

On my website [www.kingcomments.com](http://www.kingcomments.com) commentaries on all Bible books and publications on topics can be read digitally. See 'Information' on the website.

An app for Android and Apple you can download by clicking on the badges that are at the bottom of each page of the website.

On the website [www.oudesporen.nl](http://www.oudesporen.nl) all comments on the Bible books can be downloaded for free as PDF, EPUB and MOBI file. Go to <https://www.oudesporen.nl/artikelen.php?aut=1&l=EN>



