

The Letters of John and Jude

THE LETTERS OF JOHN AND JUDE

**An Explanation of these Letters
Especially for You**

Rock Solid #11

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Foreword

Dear friend,

I am glad to present this new volume of the 'Rock Solid series'. These studies are meant for your spiritual edification. If you have read the previous parts of this series, I trust that you have become fascinated by the riches of God's Word.

In this book I want to read together with you four letters from the Bible. Of these four letters, three are written by John and one by Jude. These letters are of great interest in the end times in which you live. Many rock solid truths are attacked and made uncertain. These letters show that what you have received in Christ and have become is absolutely certain. I would like to read and discuss these letters with you, so that you will be strengthened by them in your faith.

You will find that God's Spirit has inspired these letters, that is, that He is the true Writer of them. That is the guarantee that they for you too, believer in this time, are fully up to date. Therefore, they are in the Bible.

I would like to repeat the practical tips that I suggested in my previous books:

1. Provide yourself with a good translation of the Bible. Some good translations are the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), the *New King James Version* (NKJV), the *New Translation* by J.N. Darby (JND) and the *King James Version* (KJV), preferably with the New Scofield word updates. I will be using the NASB, with permission granted by The Lockman Foundation on February 10, 2016 when referencing and quoting Scripture unless I note otherwise.

2. I tried to write this book in a way that encourages you to use the Bible. At the beginning and end of each section, I have listed the Bible verses pertaining to that section. I encourage you to read those verses before and after reading the section. It would be a good idea to keep your Bible open to those verses so you can easily refer to them.
3. Self-discipline is very important. You have to be willing to discipline yourself to take time to understand the Bible better. I suggest that you read the Bible at a set time that's best for you.

To help you with this, I have divided this book into forty-six sections. I also noted with a 'V' which verse is explained. Read every day one section. If you do that, over a bit less than seven weeks you have got a good impression of three appealing letters from the Bible.

The whole Bible indeed is a great Book. It is my prayer that you will be convinced of that more and more.

I wish you God's blessing!

Middelburg, Netherlands, English edition 2016

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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.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament 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 there still follow a second and third letter. 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's 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 present. The letter is not written to a local church, but to the individual believer, thus personally to you. At the same time you are being addressed by him as somebody who partakes of a company of believers, namely 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 and indeed *eternal* life, i.e. life in its most abundant form (see Jn 10:10b). That eternal life is the Lord Jesus Himself (1Jn 5:20).

John shows in this letter how that eternal life works in you as a believer. In order 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 finds itself within you. Therefore it could not be any other way than that it reveals itself in the same way in your life.

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 ascertain and hold on to 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 do a research on water, that is if you want to know what it consists of, then you should not do a research on coffee. Coffee indeed consists nearly one hundred percent of water, but it contains elements that change the taste and color of the water and thereby it is not one hundred percent water. You ought to take pure water in order 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 intensely about that, 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

The Word of Life | verses 1-2

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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. In *verse 1* 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*”. He was like that with John and the apostles. The ‘Word of life’ was perceivable to people.

‘The beginning’ John is talking about is not the beginning of *Genesis 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 talking about in the first verse of his gospel. That beginning surpasses time, to what had no beginning, for it is said “*what was from the beginning*” (*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 to be found with people who claim that they ‘know it’ (the word ‘gnosis’ means ‘to know’ or ‘to be familiar with’). Gnosticism denies that the Lord Jesus really became flesh and it announces the error that He had only been on earth in a human appearance. In response to that John describes Him as a real

Man Whom he and his fellow apostles have really 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 the 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 without 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 having your nose on top of something;
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 a certain sense you also have gone through in your discovery of the Lord Jesus the four phases that 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 would have never been able to know what it is. You did not know how it was, just as it was with the Father. But 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 upon 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 to be 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 (*see Mk 5:27*). He came to give to you too that exalted place of fellowship and the full enjoyment of it. As a human you were not able to observe it, still less able to enjoy it, if it was not revealed to you by God's Spirit (*1Cor 2:9-10*). What John mentions here, is also written in *Micah 5:2*. There you read about the Lord Jesus as being 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 wherein 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 of these 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?

Fellowship and Complete Joy | verses 3-6

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

... 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 manifested to them, but they would 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 (*Mat 12:34b*).

‘To proclaim’ has to do with drawing up a report or making a report of what you have learnt. John has learnt from the Lord and he made a report of that, in order 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. When 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 together. For the word ‘fellowship’ you could perhaps use the nowadays word ‘relationship’. However, I think that 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 portion.

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 the Divine Persons. It is the desire of the apostles to expand the circle of fellowship. John’s intention 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 like the Father, 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 like 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 like the Son, you want to glorify the Father and magnify and honor Him.

The fellowship with the Father is therefore at the front. Directly 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 that way 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 has been 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 appeals to 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 that be otherwise? There is a '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 road that 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 when 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 related to one another (*see 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 declares 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*".

Actually, you will seek in vain in the *gospel according to John* for a statement of the Lord in which He uses these precise words. Such a statement does not need to be found anyway, for it is needless to say that His whole life declared that message, as it were. When 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 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 declare 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*". It is actually about speaking out a certain confession. Then it is something that concerns each one who confesses to be a Christian and says to be living 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. As far as he is concerned, as you may say, it is not about *how* you walk, but *where* you walk. According to him it is not about your practice, but about 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 that is taking place and where it absolutely cannot be taking place.

It is a lie when a person says that 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?

To Walk In the Light and Cleansing | *verses 7-10*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

...; 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.

When 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 *unbelievers*. 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.

You certainly do not walk alone and by yourself there. 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. Therefore 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 in order 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 allow yourself to become thoroughly aware of that, it will give you 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. On the contrary, in the light of God's truth you have seen rightly and also acknowledged what is in you. Maybe you do not run such a great risk to say that 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 you specifically call sin a real sin. Then you really prove that the truth is in you.

V9. The truth causes you to confess your sin. When 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*". When a person confesses his sins, He can, and you may even say, He *has to*, cleanse him from all un-

righteousness. 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, when a person confesses his sin, He forgives him.

Besides, confession is a profound work. To confess means that you speak out that you judge sin in the same way that God does. Therefore you do not speak about a 'little mistake' and you do not look for an excuse. Only when you see the things in the way God does, you will understand the necessity of confession and you yourself will come to confession. The forgiveness you then will experience, will be a blessing, a relief. It will enable you and renew your 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. Like in *verses 6 and 8* John again puts it in general terms in *verse 10* and says: "*If we say.*" He again includes himself. He says it like that, 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

Advocate and Propitiation | verses 1-2

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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 when 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 do 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 awful sin is, is best to be seen at the cross of Calvary, where God imposed His unrelenting judgment over 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. The cause of this fracture 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 with 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 over 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 towards sin. He is actually 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 of their sins and He therefore became the propitiation.

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 very 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. According to those who de-

fend 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 (*see e.g. 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. Only separately we are able to look at the various aspects of God's truth and admire and worship Him for what we then see.

Now read 1 John 2:1-2 again.

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

Obedience and Love | *verses 3-11*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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 could 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 very special and profound way. However, those people appear 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.

In order to stop all the insecurity and to affirm the children of God in their faith, John passes on five characteristics. Those characteristics are important for you too. Two of them are in the section that you have now in front of you. These are *obedience* and

love. The third characteristic is that the new life *does not sin* (1Jn 3:6). The fourth characteristic 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 to be 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 that you think: ‘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 accomplished the law – but the commandments of the Father were (Jn 10:17-18; 12:49; 14:31).

V4. Therefore, when a person appears and claims that 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 should 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. But if you notice with someone that he keeps the word that the Lord Jesus has spoken, then 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 that the Lord has pertaining your life. Each of His desires is a command to you. This is how He dealt with the desires of His Father. ‘His Word’ comprises more. It regards not only His desires, but also Who He Himself is as a Person, what is within Him, what His own glory is.

When 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 God, meaning 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 remain in Him, which 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 are 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 that, you also 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 *verse 7* 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, in order to love Him. That commandment only made clear that man was not able to keep it. The commandment that John is talking about was spoken out by the Lord Jesus. It is not originated from Mount of Sinai, but, so to speak, from the Father’s house. Therefore 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 declared that, He spoke about 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 talking about an old commandment that they’ve heard, for it was already mentioned by the Lord Jesus.

V8. Still 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 after all 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 thing 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 jack-o’-lantern of the false teachers who boast

on having a higher light and a 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 as such (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 “*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. When you are dealing with a real 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 hating 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 (see 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 to walk in darkness, without knowing where he is going. Such people have eyes that have been blinded by the darkness. So how could such a person be a good guide for another person (*Mat 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?

Fathers, Young Men, Children | verses 12-17

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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. The spiritual growing process begins with the stage of ‘child’. Then the stage of a ‘young man’ follows, after which the spiritual maturity will be 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 each child of God. This is where the security 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 security of the forgiveness of sins lies 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 ‘put away’, but “forgiven”. ‘To be 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 will drain 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*), which means that He will never refer to them again. Forgiveness lies in the magnificence of God’s Being, in His Name. That was what 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 intention 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, in order to fully be 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 wicked one because he has the new life. That doesn’t mean that the wicked one leaves him alone. The wicked one seeks to tempt him to love the world. That will be elaborated later in *verse 15* extensively. If you are a young man you stand in the victory. From your position as a conqueror in Christ (*see Rom 8:37*) you are able to have a life of victory.

V13c. The “*children*” in the faith, the babes, 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 child in the bosom of his mother (*Psa 131:2*). They do not need to grow in the knowledge of the Father. They *know* Him and have a personal connection 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. In order to encourage the different groups in their growth, John addresses them once more. That gives them an extra security 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. Though they do not have that strength in themselves, but they draw that 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 conquered the wicked 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 (*Mat 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 have victory 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 issues are being delivered in his confrontation with “*the world*”. There is a close relationship between the world and the wicked one. The wicked 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 each 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 religious 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 when a brother or sister was with you.

Consider carefully that the world is controlled by satan. He is the ruler of the world (*Jn 14:30; 2Cor 4:4*). The world as a sphere of influence of the wicked 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 wicked 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 immediately shut yourself 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. They are the three aspects of your being as a human, aspects that determine your personality. The rank order in which John puts these aspects is in the same way as it was with Eve (*Gen 3:6*), but contrary to the rank order that God uses (*1Thes 5:23*). Eve sees that the tree

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

Ever 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 be needing in order 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 do the dangers lie for you to isolate yourself for the love of the Father?

Characteristics of the Last Hour | verses 18-24

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that anti-christ 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 being 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 Christianity that are of a more serious nature than the things of the ‘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 'antichrist' is twofold. The word means both 'against Christ' and 'instead of Christ'. Both characteristics appear in 2 *Thessalonians* 2:4. There Paul speaks about the antichrist as the man of sin who exalts himself 'against' God and who presents 'himself' as 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. Those are the antichrists and there are a lot of them. As already said, the risk of the antichrist is the highest for the children. Antichrists are persons who bring false teachings about the Father and the Son. The antichrists for instance may possibly say very 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 the fathers in Christ, the matured believers to whom Christ is everything they need.

V19. In the days of John the antichrists have departed 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 departure 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 was the case they would have stayed. John uses this simple reasoning to make clear that they were wrong people.

You may ask yourself how about the time in which we live. The antichrists do not depart anymore, but establish themselves in Christianity. I think that the antichrists do not depart anymore because of the confusion in 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 doctrines. What is true and what is not true? What should you believe and what not? It often happens that a false doctrine is being brought in a very 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'). That was 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* doctrines 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. Without a doubt you can reject everything that is in contrast to God's Word. 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 from 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 from 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 in that way to get an entry to the children of God.

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

V22. “*The liar*”, thus he who uses the lie, is to be recognized by a twofold denial. It is a person

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 Christianity is very deceptive, because it often happens without any thought about the Son.

Speaking about 'God' also covers the distance between Christendom on the one hand and Judaism and Islam on the other hand. The orthodox Judaism and Islam deny the essential truth of Christendom and are absolutely 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, in order to test the truth of a statement still remains: *"What do you think about the Christ?" (Mat 22:42).*

V24. John has 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 allow yourself to 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.

Actually you are sent 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 revealed (*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 would love to tell you that you can get it better.

Now read 1 John 2:18-24 again.

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

Anointing and Abiding In Him | verses 25-29

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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. So, 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 a “*promise*”. The promise that He has promised is “*eternal life*”. It is not a promise of which the fulfilment is still to come. You have what is promised, that is the 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 fulfil? That is impossible and therefore there is no room for any insecurity.

As I already noted at the beginning, there is, beside the aspect of eternal life and the new life in you, also the aspect of eternal life as a sphere of life wherein you live. That too belongs to what is promised that you have received. The sphere you have turned into through faith and wherein 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 your childship 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 in order 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 truth (*Jn 16:13*).

Therefore 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 about everything (*Jn 14:26*). *He* testifies of 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 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 gatherings where the Word is being explained and reading bible study books would be a waste of time. Christ has given gifts to His church, amongst others that of a teacher in order 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 imbalance.

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.

Actually, '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. In *verse 28* 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 revelation of the Lord Jesus. In that way he refers to His coming which he himself expects.

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

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 feature with each child of God. (You cannot read anywhere that the Lord Jesus is born of God, for 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 it is revealed 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 to live like 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

Children of God | verses 1-3

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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. Did that ever happen to you, that you are suddenly awed by the awareness of being a child of God? When 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 ever have invented or ventured 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”, thus 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 when you are faithful to the Lord and go your way separated from the world. It also applies when 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 ungodly 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 (*Mat 26:69-75*).

V2. Once again John speaks out the certainty 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 being 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 shall be like Him, is because we then "*see Him just as He is*".

To be able to see Him 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 "*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 out of your life. In that way you already please 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?

Practice Righteousness and Brotherly Love | verses 4-12

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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. In verse 4 John speaks about committing “sin” and “lawlessness”. That forms a great contrast with the hope in Him and the cleansing that results from it, which you have read in the previous verses. Due to that contrast you feel the power of his argument. Cleansing and committing 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 commits sin as a way of life. He is doing it all the time, committing 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.

When 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 was 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 had never sinned, because there is no sin in Him. That is the Lord Jesus. He was manifested – that is when He came to the earth – 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 no sin in Him.

V6. The result is that you abide in Him now, meaning that you have been made one with Him because you have received Him as your life. That is why you do not sin. That 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 features 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, separately from the extent in 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 they will 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 like 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 somebody who does what the Lord Jesus is. Such a person is therefore also righteous.

V8. The opposite of practicing righteousness is committing sin. In someone who commits sin you recognize the devil. The origin of sin lies with the devil. The devil sins from the very beginning of his existence as devil. He is the father of sin. He who sins, exposes the traits 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 like 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 the earth and finished the work on the cross.

V9. The opposite of ‘being of the devil’ and ‘committing sin’ is ‘being born of God’ and ‘not committing sin’. “*Who is born of*

God", has life that has its origin in God. That life comes in a person 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 the same seed (*cf. 1Cor 15:38*). Sin is totally alien to the seed of God. From that seed no sin is being produced; it does not cause anyone to commit sin and it cannot sin, just like 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 (*see 1Pet 1:23*). The seed is the new life principle that God has planted in you. In order to plant that seed, God's Word was preached and it came to and within you through the power of the Holy Spirit. In that way you were inwardly purified and the new life has come within you, where it is developed and growing (*cf. Jam 1:18,21*).

V10. Therefore a person 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 is where the whole human race consists of. Both families have their own typical family characteristics. John indicates what is not present with the children of God. When 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. Therefore wherever righteousness and brotherly love are not to be found there is nothing of God to be found, but the devil is revealed.

V11. To this statement John attaches the message "*that we should love one another*". You have heard this message from the begin-

ning. Nothing else has ever been told to you. In the Old Testament there was the command to love your neighbor. Due to that the question arose who then was your 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 come across a new order of dealing with matters. There you come across the term 'brothers'. Throughout this term a particular dignity can be heard.

The Lord Jesus speaks about His own as "*My sheep*" and "*My friends*" (Jn 10:27; 15:14), but only in John 20:17 He speaks about "*My brothers*" for the first time. 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 it 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 from 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 :11).

1. From his *sacrifice* his self-centered religiosity, his indifference towards God's holiness, appears.

2. From his *works* his anger, the lack of brotherly love, appears.
3. From his *way* it appears that he turned his back to God.

That is how it went from bad to worse with Cain. That is the result when a person, 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?

The Practice of Love | verses 13-18

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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 like that with you. You are someone who is born of God. That's why the life from 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 like Abel did and also like 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 when that happens. You do not need to, John says here (*cf. Rev 17:6-7*), because you belong to a company, which he for only once in his letter addresses here with "*brethren*", with which he indicates both brothers and sisters. This name radiates the warmth of the family relation in contrast to the cold hatred of the world.

V14. Due to this family relation and the appreciation of it you know that you have been transferred from 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 being 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. A person who does not love his brother and who abides in death is also a person who hates his brother. He looks at his brother with eyes that are 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 within 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. That does not seek the death but the life for the brothers. 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. When 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 will surely 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 in order 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. Nevertheless it is not presented like that 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 a person 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 towards 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 this will really be expected of you in practice? 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 would sacrifice 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, will shut up his heart from him. 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 earthly goods that 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 exceeding truths have their effect in the most daily circumstances.

In these truths the rules of the people of Israel towards the poor and rich Israelites are also an illustration for us (*Deu 15:7-11*). When 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 shut up their heart for others and seek to obtain other people's properties. They also want them to subject themselves to them (*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".

To love is a matter of deed and ought to happen in truth. Truth is not the doctrine here, but has to do with truth in the inner man (*Psa 51:6*). The point is that love is true and sincere. One should not give on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis. When you give from the thought to get better off, you lack sincerity.

It is possible to get better off from a situation or something in both material and spiritual view. 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 what the Lord Jesus means when He in this same context – expressing benevolence – says, that you should not let your left hand know what your right hand does (*Mat 6:3*).

When 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?

Confidence Before God | *verses 19-24*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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 when 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 will work like that. He does not speak about *the extent in which* it becomes visible, but about *the fact that* it becomes visible.

When 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. When you speak about brotherly love you will surely, just like me, directly notice in your conscience that you pretty much fall short of that. It can even be the case that you catch yourself pretending in a certain case, while you do not sense 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 everything. All those times that you did not show brotherly love may lead you to the question whether you really 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' (see *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. When 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. On the one hand it is dangerous to constantly look at yourself. Then you will remain to live between hope and fear, for your practice will always show lacks. Therefore it is so important to listen to the message of John, what he says about the new, eternal life. On the other hand 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 therein, 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 confident relationship 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 are allowed to 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 are allowed to tell Him everything that you desire (*Phil 4:6*). It will never occur to Him that you are too much for Him or that you bore Him with your requests. It is a confidence which 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 undisturbed relationship of love between the children of God and the Father. He describes the family atmosphere.

V22. In that sphere, wherein children feel themselves at home, wherein they know to be accepted, they pray to the Father for things that 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 behave like He, the Father, desires them to. When 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.

When 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 a good thing to firstly say 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 fulfil. 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, due to which you are pleasing to Him.

V23. Which are the commandments here? In *verse 23* you read about His commandment to "*believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ*", to which directly is related the commandment that we should "*love one another*". That means that it is all about 'faith' and 'brotherly love'. You have already seen that those aspects are with you. And that helps to make it more comprehensible.

In order 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.

Therefore it is not about *whether*, but *that* you keep His commandments. When you read which commandments they are, it appears that there is only one commandment that consists of two aspects. The first aspect of the commandment is to believe "*on 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 related 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 from the faith in God's son.

The core of Christendom is love, but actually only *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 misguiding, horrible saying. No, men can only truly love one another with the love of God when they believe in the Son of God. The commandment to love one another comes from Him. It was not imposed on you in order for 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 ponder on them because it is your joy to ponder on 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 that 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 security 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 a great confirmation 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

God's Spirit and the Spirit of the Antichrist | *verses 1-6*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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. There he mentions Him as an emphasis of the security that God abides in you. In the section you now have in front of you he will put the work of God's Spirit against the work 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 (*see 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 to not 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 talks about God and Jesus. That is certainly not alright. You ought to test the spirits and you ought to know from which resource they speak.

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

It is not said that you should test people to know whether they are believers or that they share the right doctrine, but it is about testing spirits. It is not about an orthodox confession, but about the question from which source the 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 the lie and therefore speak through a demonic spirit.

It is about spirits that imitate the work of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of the 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 was hidden. That they "*have gone out*", indicates an activity. Activity always impress people. What also is impressive, is that they are with a lot of them. You may have an idea about that kind of influence. When many people claim something, it impresses more than when 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 really became flesh (*Jn 1:14*).

He has not put on the form of blood and flesh temporarily. That He came "*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 somebody and no clear confession about Him comes out of his mouth, then it is not right. Such a person is not of God, meaning that 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.

A person 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 whole spirit in which he comes and acts (*2Thes 2:3*). It is someone who does not confess Jesus and furthermore in no way he considers God. The antichrist is the man in whom sin is 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 of God, but comes from satan.

V4. What should you do when 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 are a conqueror of that spirit. You have not overcome him by winning a discussion. You should not even start a discussion, for then you will on the contrary 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 manifested to you through the apostles.

You are born of God and you may see yourself in the position of conqueror, because you have the Holy Spirit within you through the 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 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 introduce higher forms of truth to you. Hold on to the faith that you have heard from the beginning and behave like a conqueror and the enemy will flee (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 corresponds to all who belong to the world and not to the believers. The world is under the power of satan and he rules it. From that evil system he sends his demons to dispose of their pestiferous doctrines. What they bring perfectly corresponds with the people who belong to the world. Those people listen to them, because they speak the same language as the men 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 absolutely no relation

between those two. Therefore there is also no relation 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 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.

Actually, 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. When that is spoken under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you will listen to it.

Now read 1 John 4:1-6 again.

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

God Is Love | *verses 7-14*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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. It is God Who loves you.

The fact that you have the nature of God has to become visible, for love in itself is not to be seen. The love you have for the other person "*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 a Divine love. In God's Word you also read about the love of man, which he received from his Creator. That's actually called 'natural love' and that indicates for instance the love of parents for their children and the other way around. That love is also given by God, but that love can cool down. It goes without saying that by natural love God has never intended a wrong love, such as homosexual love. That is against natural love (*see Rom 1:26-27*).

The 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 a proof that you are born of God and that you know God. You see how love is related to its origin and the knowledge of it. *To live* (through birth 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.

The real 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 forth from the fellowship with God. When we talk 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 it 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 an inaccessible 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 lies completely outside you. False teachers also speak about love, but then as a mystical experience in order to learn to know God in that way. In order to succeed you must turn into yourself and follow your own feelings. That's of course not the way. 'Toward' you means that it surely lies outside you, but it also means that you were allowed to observe, acknowledge and accept that manifestation. That's how you received life.

V10. You had no life, for you were dead in 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 to be found with you and me. Everything in God's love came forth from Him. His heart went out to you, because He also wanted you to take part in a company of people whom He loves to bring into His presence, to His heart. He took everything away that stood in the way by sending His Son as "*the propitiation for our sins*" (which includes also yours). Herein you see the great price He was willing to pay for.

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 a lofty 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 toward the other person is being displayed to its full advantage.

When God, Who is the source of love, abides in you (and it 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 the things in accordance to their essence and not in accordance 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 relation to the propitiation due to 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 security. You actually can know that by the fact that God "*has given*

us of His Spirit". Due to the fact that He has given you of His Spirit you now already have part in the same sphere of fellowship that you soon will enjoy in the house of the Father. "*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 are in God and He is in you – not from yourself or another person, but from God's Spirit. Through the Spirit you share with God what is His.

V14. The Spirit therefore gives you the inner security that you abide in God and that God abides in you. But something more is added that is external, which means what is outside you, but what you actually see and what you testify of. You have not seen the Spirit nor do you testify of 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 of it, refers to the Son, Who was sent by the Father "*[to be] the Savior of the world*".

'Seeing' these things and 'testifying' of 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 are also able to 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?

Perfect Love | *verses 15-21*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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 security to recognize whether a person abides in God and whether God abides in such a person. That security 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 like 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 sow about it. You can make this statement your own too. You have known and believed “*the love which God has for*” you. ‘Knowing’ means that you have realized, and ‘believing’ means that you have accepted.

Once more 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. Due to that you have life from God. The Son is your life. That implies that you abide in love and therefore you abide in Him 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*”. When God is love and He abides in you and you in Him, there is no lack in that love. You can note that when 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 boldness. You do not need to have any fear for the Judge, because ‘you are in the world just 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. Due to that 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 that 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 every-

thing 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 for the judgment.

John already spoke twice about confidence. In *chapter 2:28* it is about the confidence at the coming of the Son: how you are able to look forward to Him without any hindrance. In *chapter 3:21* it is said that you now already have confidence in respect to your relation toward God, in order to ask Him in confidence for what you are in need of.

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 Whom 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 driven 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 a person, 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 says very fervently that the fear has been 'cast out'. There is a power in love working that causes fear to lose the battle. He who fears, "*is not perfected in love*". He

who fears has not comprehended the love of God, because he has no part in it (*cf. Mat 25:25,30*). Such painful fear for punishment doesn't fit in the sphere of confidence of love wherein God's children may find themselves.

You may question yourself how this can accord with the appeal of Peter 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. Therefore John does not intend to say that you should not have respect for God now. Confidence and respect go together very well.

V19. In *verse 19* John concludes the portion 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 are not to and cannot be separated from one another. That you are able to love is because He first loved you. He is the source. John does not go into details Who the '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 does love.

V20. Now you have seen what love is up to *verse 19*, from *verse 20* you read about the test of love. A person may claim to love God, but how can you know whether this is really true? Well, you have discovered again in this letter that God's nature is also to be found in your brother and sister and that they are in the same relation toward God like you are. He who says that he loves God will love all who love the Son of God as their life. Life expresses itself. What is being 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.

A person 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, we find such a person in the company of Christians. 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 completely missing.

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 within himself nor does he see anything in the other that he finds worthy to love. 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 *are* to 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

Love and Overcoming Faith | verses 1-5

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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 passes on a new characteristic which is typical for a person who 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 (*Mat 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 “*the Father*”, or literally, as “*the one who begets*”, thus as the Giver of the new life, you also find love for everyone who is begotten of God. If you should ask yourself who your brother is, then that is everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ. That faith is the 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 would attack the very heart of God if you say that you love Him but hate His children.

Therefore the love for all God's children is a common fact. That love is there because of the same Father Who is shared by all children of God. You may have heard somebody say that all people are children of one Father. Of course that is a harsh denial of the fact that all men are sinners and are therefore separated from God because of their sins. Conversion and a new birth are necessary. Only when there is life from God, only when He has begotten somebody, this person has been brought in relation to God as his Father.

V2. In *verse 1* 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 that means that you cannot always go the same way of faith with each believer. I would like to 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 and they make him remind his brother of what their father has said.

The lesson is clear, I think. Our love towards one another is to be directed by our love towards 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 state of 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 turn to be our thoughts too about them and therefore we will remain in the love of the Lord Jesus.

John says very concisely that God's love simply means that you obey 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 the 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 the water, is not for no reason. This is how the commandments are being carried out through the new life with the greatest pleasure.

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*). Indeed the law was given to a people in the flesh, a sinful people, with the command for them to keep and in

that way they could earn life. The difference between the law and the 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 the faith has God as a starting point. When you believe, you have become wholeheartedly obedient to the doctrine in which you have been taught (*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. Now we have paid attention to the relation towards God and towards the brothers, we will continue with dealing with the relation towards the world. The relation towards God and the brothers is determined by the new life. That is what causes the connection between you and God on the one hand and between you and the brothers on the other hand. However, when you look at your relation towards the world you see nothing that connects to the new life. There is in no way a touch point. The new life has its own sphere in which the world has absolutely no involvement. Due to your new life you have your own world, which is the world where the Lord Jesus and the Father are everything.

Your relation toward the world is not only characterized by the *absence* of any touch point between the whole company you belong to and the world. That relation 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 conquerors. 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 conquerors and listen to what they know of Him.

The whole company of the family of God's children is standing in the world as a conquering power. The power of their victory is their faith, because faith teaches them to refrain from the hostile world and makes them to be focused 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 connected in a life relationship by faith. 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 the victory over the world, John speaks now about the faith in Jesus as the Son of God. That emphasizes His Being as truly Man on the one hand and on the other hand it emphasizes His eternal Deity. In these both aspects of His Person (if I may and am allowed to say that) 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, has no part on Him. But the victory is secure for anyone who believes in Him like that.

Now read 1 John 5:1-5 again.

Reflection: Why are the commandments of God not burdensome?

God's Testimony Concerning His Son | *verses 6-13*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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 Whom He is and he also tells about the work that He has accomplished. He firstly points to Him as the One Who has come. That refers to His coming on earth and His whole sojourn on earth. In that way He has established what He said to God with His coming 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 (*Mat 4:4*), of which the water is a metaphor (*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 is not to 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 firstly speaks about 'blood' and then about 'water'. You may call it the *historical order*. This is how it happened on the cross. The *blood* is the ground for *God* in order to be able to redeem men from their sins. In that way He can give eternal life to men. The *water* puts the purification of the sins of the *sinner* by the power of the Word more in the forefront.

Here in his letter John firstly 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 purified you from your sins, for they were a big 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 witness of the water and the blood the witness 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 “*by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established*” (2Cor 13:1).

V8. John mentions the witnesses again in *verse 8* (see *verse 6*), but now he mentions the Spirit first. He does that because the Spirit has caused you to accept the testimony about the Son of God. It is because of the work of the Spirit in your heart through which you have understood and accepted Who the Lord Jesus is and what He has done. The three witnesses “*agree as one*” in their testimony about what you needed in order to partake of the eternal life which was given to you in the Son. This threefold testimony gives the unmistakable security 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 instance 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 witness of *God*, which is greater than the witness of any man whosoever. God has testified of His Son when He was baptized in the Jordan river and also at His glorification on the mountain (*Mat 3:17; 17:5*). The testimony had sounded, but the sound did not fade away. The testimony resounds at a fully un-muffled force until this day and that will last till eternity.

V10. If this is the testimony that the triune God has testified of 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 within you. 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 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 is solid and it is un-touchable for the most vicious and rude attacks. You therefore do not need to be impressed by the fiercest oppression. 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 a relation 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 within you. Thereby bear in mind that this life is the life which is "*in His Son*". He is that true God and the eternal life, as it is written further (*verse 20*). You may compare it with your hand that has indeed life, but only in relation to your body. The life of your hand is the life of the whole human. 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. Therefore eternal life is not to be enjoyed outside the Son.

V12. Despite what anyone may say or claim, the brief and fervent conclusion is: If you have the Son you have the life and everything that is in it. But if you do not have the Son, you have nothing and you miss everything that is related to life. The big difference is

made by whether you have or not have the Son of God as your life.

V13. John is about to conclude his letter. As an introduction to his ending words he tells you why he has written all the foregoing. Where the security is concerned of what is said, the Bible puts an emphasis on 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 actually 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. In order to know more of it you should read and explore God's Word. You will surely absorb everything in your heart that you discover of Him therein with great sincerity 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 are to discover its treasures. Spiritually speaking you must set your foot on the ground there. You are allowed to call each place that you set your foot on, your property, while basically the whole land has been 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?

Knowledge of Eternal Life | *verses 14-21*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

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. Verse 14 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 the 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, security and safety. You are familiar with God, you are at home with Him. It all results from the possession and the knowing of the 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 very 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 unfamiliarity regarding the answer to His prayers. He did not need to question Himself whether the Father had indeed 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 are allowed to pray. You have the confidence to do that. And when you pray for something that is according to His will, He will hear you, meaning that He will answer you, for He always hears you, after all. A nice example of somebody 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, meaning 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 actually indicates that we do not consider it that important. We need to take time for prayer. When 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. When you pray for his or her sake 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 the sake of a brother who is sinning. When you see a brother sinning, you respond – that's what the apostle presumes – with Christian love. That love is expressed in praying for the sake of the other person. The fellowship between him and the Father has been disturbed. He has no more confidence and is no more able to enjoy the blessings of that

fellowship. Therefore your love will firstly cause you to pray for him.

When sin has entered into somebody's life, death has also entered into his life, which implies in this case the absence of the joy of life. The effect of the prayer is that the brother is being 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 the relationship with the Lord.

You can be sure that when a believer sins, it is a sin not leading to death. When it is a sin leading to death, it will become clear by for instance certain circumstances (e.g. *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 into the land because of his sin. When he asked God if he could still enter into 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 make them to be taken into captivity (*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. Due to 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 will no longer maintain such a person as His witness on earth and takes Him away. When that's the case, then there is mention of sin leading to death.

V17. By putting this emphasis on the 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 very 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 is absolutely not allowed to have any room in the life of a child of God. In case he still sins he has to confess it as soon as possible. Praying for the sake of one another is a great contribution to achieve that.

V18. John concludes his letter with three verses which all three begin with “*we know*” (verses 18,19,20), with thereafter 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 doing 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 him*”. It is completely safe and untouchable for the evil. The evil has no point of connection therein, just like the Lord Jesus says of Himself (Jn 14:30). And He is that new life within 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, 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 related. You belong to God, while the world belongs to the evil 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*" that you may know "*Him who is true*". Formerly you were darkened in your understanding (*Eph 4:18*), however intelligent you may be. 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 into 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, it is even said that you are *in* Him. That is not a knowledge on 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. Keep yourselves from idols, those are 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. The eternal life that you have received is He. You know the Father and Him Who 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?

The Second Letter of John

Introduction

The *second* and *third letter of John* are closely related to his first letter and are as much inspired as the first. These are two brief letters. In that view they may seem to be of less importance. He who thinks that, is absolutely mistaken. They are of fundamental importance to us just as the first letter, we cannot do without these letters. Their spiritual power is not in the tough language, but in the simple terms. As well as in his first letter (and that is also typical for the gospel that he wrote) John does not use many words and also not difficult words. But that what he writes is very profound.

In these two brief letters you do not obtain new truths. It's about the same themes as in the first letter. Also here it is about *truth* and *love*, which both appear together in both letters approximately ten times. But who will know the truth (the Lord Jesus is the truth) and the love (God is love) in their full extent? The more you ponder on it, the more you come to the conviction of their infinity. Nevertheless, in both letters John finds a way to bring truth and love that close, that you will recognize their value. Through these letters you get examples of how you in your faith life can live up to the teaching of the first letter in practice.

The two letters go hand in hand, they complement one another. The primary subject of the second letter is the false teachers, while the third letter is about the true laborers of God. The second letter shows how you ought to deal with those who bring a false doctrine. You must reject them, you should not even greet them. The third letter shows how your attitude ought to be towards those who bring the truth. You must accept them and overwhelm them with love, you must help and support them in their work.

The second letter deals with the danger that you do not expose the false teacher and have fellowship with him, even if only by a greeting. That danger is greater for women, and for this reason the second letter is addressed to a woman. Therefore, in case you are a sister, you ought not to leave the discernment of a false teacher to certain brothers. The other opposite danger is that one of the third letter. That danger is that you do not recognize the teacher that comes with God's truth and do not show him hospitality. Men run a greater risk not to show hospitality, for hospitality is not a typical characteristic of sisters only. Generally men are more selfish and less inclined to be hospitable. They also see competition much faster. It is not for nothing that they are exhorted to receive the true laborer not with suspicion, but by welcoming him and supporting him.

The message of both letters is that you have to discern what a teacher preaches. Thereby you should not let yourself be misguided to discern according to the extent or magnificence of the gift or according to a service or education or diplomas. The only criterion is whether a person brings the truth or not. Briefly said, you are to reject those who do not bring the truth and receive those who do bring the truth. Therefore it is always necessary to test the doctrine that a person brings. When he brings the sound doctrine, you should welcome him. A woman or man who possesses the Word, like for instance these letters, is able to judge his doctrine and is also responsible to do that.

Both letters are not addressed to believers in general, like the first letter, but to individual believers. Added to that the second letter is also addressed to children. They also are responsible to recognize and reject a false doctrine. It is not about them to be able to analyze a false doctrine. The point is that they are indeed able to discern the voice of the good Shepherd from the voice of the false shepherds. They should always be radical about that.

The woman and the children are to know that they should not even greet a person who approaches them with a false doctrine, not even for the sake of civic politeness. They are to take a clear stand toward the evil and the false doctrine. In this letter we will

pay attention to what that false doctrine is. There is no letter in the New Testament that explains more clearly how to deal with false teachers than this *second letter of John*. That surely underlines the significance of this letter.

At the end of this introduction I would like to give a division of the letter. The letter can be divided in different ways, but I find the following division the best and clearest:

1. *Verses 1-3* salutation of the apostle: grace, mercy, peace.
2. *Verse 4* joy of the apostle: obedient children.
3. *Verses 5-6* admonition of the apostle: to walk in love.
4. *Verses 7-11* care of the apostle: antichristian deceivers.
5. *Verses 12-13* hope of the apostle: to meet each other soon.

2 John

Sender and Recipients | *verses 1-2*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, 2 for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: ...

V1. The author, John, presents himself, without mentioning his name, to the readers as “*the elder*”. That means that he is of a respectable age and writes this letter as an experienced believer. So he does not write as an apostle, although he is an apostle. Here-in you taste the heart of the shepherd who is worried about the sheep of the flock of the Lord Jesus.

In this letter, which includes the warning to beware of the anti-christian doctrine, he addresses “*the chosen lady and her children*”. That is not without reason. Actually, a woman easily allows herself to be deceived, as it already appeared in paradise (1Tim 2:14). Sin entered the world because satan deceived Eve. Paul is talking about false teachers who approach women in particular (2Tim 3:6-7). Sect leaders often visit the households at daytime when husbands are regularly not at home. Children may also open the door. That is why they are also warned about the deceivers in this letter.

John calls the lady “*chosen*”. How can he know that? Not because he has looked in the books of God, but because her life is an open book. Her life testifies of her being a believer and therefore an elect (cf. 1Thes 1:4-5). By addressing her with these words, he expresses his respect for her, without falling into flattery. It must have been encouraging for her and have made her happy. Doesn't it make you happy when somebody says that it is to be seen in

your life that you are a Christian? It is nothing to be proud of, but you may accept it in gratitude and as an encouragement from the Lord.

It is not unthinkable that the chosen lady is a widow. No husband is being addressed or mentioned. If there was one it would have been impolite and discourteous to address her and ignore him. After all, the husband is the head of the family. It is also important to note that John carefully avoids the word 'beloved' in this letter. He uses this term in the first and the third letter. He does not do that here, in order to exclude wrong thoughts on his relation toward her. He also addresses the children and makes them share in his love.

His love for the lady and her children is a love "*in truth*". To love in truth means that it is a truthful love, a love without unspiritual ulterior motives. It is a love which is being carried and surrounded by truth. "*All who know the truth*" share in his love towards her. To know the truth means to know God, just as He has revealed Himself in Christ. The Lord Jesus is the truth about and pertaining to God (*Jn 14:6-10*). Also the Spirit is the truth (*1Jn 5:6*). Through the Spirit we learn to know the full truth of Whom God is. He who knows the truth loves the brothers also, for they are also of the truth.

V2. The love of John is not only truthful, in truth (*verse 1*), but his love is also "*for the sake of the truth*". His love does not only express itself in acting truthfully, acting out of the truth, but it is at the same time an acting that testifies of the truth. That way of acting upholds the truth.

The truth, John says to the lady and her children, abides in us. By that he indicates that Jesus Christ, Who is the truth, abides in you. He will also be *with* you forever. You have received Him as your life. John clearly showed that to you in his first letter. You will never ever lose that life. At the same time it is a life that is with you. Therefore you will always have Him as a Person, as the Object of your admiration, with you (*see Mat 28:20; cf. Jn 14:16-17*).

Now read 2 John :1-2 again.

Reflection: What is the issue of this letter? Why has it been written to a lady and her children?

Walk In Truth and Love | verses 3-7

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

...: 3 Grace, mercy [and] peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 4 I was very glad to find [some] of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment [to do] from the Father. 5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though [I were] writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. 6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ [as] coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

V3. In the two letters addressed to Timothy, thus also to a person, you also came across the words “*grace, mercy [and] peace*” (1Tim 1:2; 2Tim 1:2) in the greeting. Only, there it is more a wish, while here it is given as a security, “*will be with us*”. It is also not something that John determines for the lady and her children only, but also for himself, which you can derive from the word “*us*”.

“*Grace*” is a wonderful expression of the love of God that gives security. God shows His grace without any appeal. Divine love reaches out in grace to people without hope. “*Mercy*” has got more to do with the circumstances whereby you desperately need God’s compassion. It is the personal compassion of God in your life on earth, whereby He provides in the personal needs in times of weakness and tests. A direct result of knowing the grace and mercy of God is that you have “*peace*” in your heart in the circumstances you find yourself.

These three blessings come from Divine Persons Who are presented in a special way and Who are related to each other in a special way. This is what makes it so rich and solid. The word “*from*” is read both before ‘God the Father’ and before ‘the Lord

Jesus Christ'. This shows the evenness of both Divine Persons. With 'God the Father' you feel safe. With 'the Lord Jesus Christ' (He is mentioned here by His full name) you think of three relations in which you stand toward Him. He is your 'Lord', that is Him Who rules over you; He is also 'Jesus', the Man on earth Who has redeemed you from your sins (*Mat 1:21*); He is also 'Christ', that is He in Whom God has found all His pleasure and in Whom you are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (*Eph 1:3*).

An extra detail is the indication "*the Son of the Father*". That appears only here in the New Testament. Therefore this name fully harmonizes with the character of this letter, wherein it is all about the most important truth about His Person. The Son is fully God and fully Man and He is also the Eternal Son. The Lord Jesus is the Son of the Father. There is only one Son and only one Father. That is the truth. Everything that contradicts that is a lie. All truth of the *letters of John* has this truth as a center and starting point.

The end of the greeting, "*in truth and love*", indicates the relational sphere that is enjoyed between John and the lady and between the believers. There are no dishonest or obscure and deceitful elements there. Wherever the truth ignores love, the heart gets cold and knowledge becomes plain head knowledge. Wherever love is at the expense of the truth, it is a love that has got nothing to do with God's love, but it has become a human, carnal emotion.

V4. John utters his great joy on some children of the lady, who as it seems, do not live at home anymore. Anyway, it seems that John has met them somewhere else. This testimony of her children must have encouraged the mother too. All her efforts had been focused on convincing them of the truth and to make them walk in it. Her efforts apparently have borne fruit, for now they have moved they show the effect of what they have inherited from their upbringing. She must have had just as many worries about her children who live away from home, as Job had long ago (*Job 1:5*). What John is telling her is the reward for her faithfulness of sowing the seed in the hearts of her children. It shows her attitude towards her children.

What is previously said does not necessarily imply that the lady had other children who did not walk in the truth. It is said “[some] of your children”. John probably does not know all her children, although he addresses indeed all children in *verse 1*. It is possible that she still has younger children who live at home. Walking in truth means that you daily live in the sphere of the truth, that is what God has revealed of Himself in Christ. Each aspect of your life ought to bear that characteristic.

Before John will tell the lady to close and lock her door for false teachers, he firstly speaks about the commandment of love. He puts walking in truth on the same level as the commandment of love. It is not possible to walk in truth when there is no love. It is a “*commandment from the Father*” which you see to be fulfilled in the life of the Lord Jesus. The Father determined the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. Out of His love toward the Father He went the way that the Father showed Him. The commandment is that one of love and love causes a person to keep the commandments.

V5. Concerning the commandment of love, John has a plea with the lady that they also really love one another in practice. He is not passing on a new version of the commandment, he doesn't add anything to it, and he doesn't change anything about it. Of course it can be better understood and brought more into practice. That is what he is pleading with the lady. The commandment of love asks for a practical effect that can always improve. You can never say: ‘Now I show enough love, more is not necessary’ (*cf. 1Thes 4:10*).

This is “*not ... a new commandment*”, for the Lord Jesus has already given it (*Jn 13:34*). The Lord indeed calls it a new commandment. That is because it is fulfilled in a new way, His way. It is also new because now it is also possible to be fulfilled by His disciples, for they have Him as their life. It is a new commandment from the beginning, which means from the ministry of the Lord Jesus as Man on earth.

V6. The old commandment was imposed on man in flesh and was intended to gain life in that way. The new commandment belongs

to the new life, which is Christ. It is not intended to gain life, but to live life. You have new life and you have received the Holy Spirit. Due to that you are able to fulfill the new commandment. You may say that the new commandment is new towards the old commandment in the following aspects:

1. it is not given as a condition to live;
2. it is perfectly practiced in Christ;
3. it is addressed to people who have that new life;
4. these people are in relation toward God as children toward the Father;
5. the standard is new, for to love can happen now 'as I have loved you'.

True love is tested by the fact whether one is walking according to the commandments of God. It can be said indeed that people love one another, but it is only true when it appears that the commandments of God determine their life. Loving one another is having a relation with one another in accordance with God's commandment. The love of a Christian is not a feeling in the first place, but a deed of obedience.

V7. The activities of the "*many deceivers*" who had gone out into the world, make it necessary that the believers walk in truth and in love. Because the woman is hospitable and welcomes laborers for the Lord, providing them with food and accommodation, she is to be warned for these deceivers, who could misuse her kindness.

But how she is to find out whether she has got to do with a deceiver, who creeps into households and captivates (gullible) women (2Tim 3:6)? Deceivers will not say that they are servants of satan and that they seek to deceive the saints (2Cor 11:13-15). The apostle is telling her that the deceivers are to be recognized

by what they *do not* confess. Not confessing actually means denying (1Jn 2:22).

A deceiver is someone who drags another person on the wrong path. The word is derived from 'lead into error' or 'lead astray'. Deceivers are people who have gone out to destroy Christendom with evil doctrines. They confess Jesus Christ, but "*not acknowledge*" Him "*[as] coming in the flesh*". Has come in the flesh implies that He became flesh when He came, meaning that He became Man and will remain Man forever. Ever since His coming in the flesh His being a Man is just as much included in His Person as His Godhead is included.

By denying that the Lord Jesus became truly Man has serious consequences for the faith. If He had not become truly Man, we absolutely never could have been saved. Through a man sin came into the world and therefore only a man could take away sin, which the Man Jesus Christ did.

The many deceivers are being inspired by "*the deceiver and the antichrist*". The spirit of that evil person is active in many persons. Each of the many deceivers personally has a direct connection with the deceiver and the antichrist. A deceiver is a foreshadow and harbinger of that one deceiver and antichrist and is preparing the way for him. Through these deceivers the foundation of the Christian faith is being affected. That happens by denying the coming of Christ in the flesh.

Now read 2 John :3-7 again.

Reflection: Why is it important to walk in truth and in love?

The Doctrine of Christ | verses 8-13

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into [your] house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. 12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to [do so] with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full. 13 The children of your chosen sister greet you.

V8. The call “*watch yourselves*” precludes the great warning that John has for this sister, regarding the antichristian deceivers. These people attack the Son and teach things about Him that are blasphemous. They peddle to bring their false teachings to others. The lady is not to allow herself to be involved with them and is not to receive them. You do not need to know all false teachings about the Lord Jesus. It is enough if you know the teachings of the Scripture about Him.

John speaks about himself and his co-workers. Those who came to faith through them must be careful not to lose those things that the apostles have worked for by listening to the deceiver. He who does not watch himself and thinks he can have contact with false teachers will lose the reward that he was going to receive. When the fruit of the labor will remain to the end, it will be ascribed to the one who received the teaching. That will happen when the believers will not open themselves for deceivers.

V9. “*The teaching of Christ*” is not the doctrine that Christ has brought, first Himself and later by His apostles. It is the doctrine of which He is the object, the doctrine concerning Him. The important characteristic of the doctrine of Christ is whole-heartedly

believed and confessed by each child of God, while the devil is making major efforts to spread false doctrines about that. The doctrine of Christ regards anyway: His eternal Godhead, His birth from a virgin, His perfection as Man, His sinlessness, the impossibility of sinning, His substitutionary suffering, His physical resurrection, glorification and return.

Each deviation of this doctrine must be fiercely rejected by you. The difference between the doctrine of Christ and that what deviates from it and how you recognize it, is to be illustrated as follows. It is like someone who is being trained to distinguish false banknotes from the genuine ones. Such a person is being taught in the smallest details about the composition, the appearance and the structure of a genuine banknote. When after his graduation he receives a stack of banknotes with some false ones in between, he will surely pick the false ones out. Has he studied the false ones? No, he has studied the real ones, which made him able to recognize the deviations. The counterfeits can be many and more varieties are being created more and more. All counterfeits have in common that they deviate from the genuine banknote in some detail.

Apply this to the voice of the good Shepherd and the voice of the hireling of the devil. If you know the voice of the good Shepherd, then any other voice will be that of a hireling of the devil (*Jn 10:4-5*).

It is about false teachers here, people who know what they say and who try to enforce their false doctrine. It is not about people who are deceived or who even ignorantly use terms that dishonor the Lord. Such people would be willing to admit their mistake directly when they are corrected by others.

The description in *verse 9* goes further than only the denial that is mentioned in *verse 7* (the denial of the Humanity of the Lord Jesus). The doctrine of Christ contains the whole revealed truth about the Lord Jesus, everything concerning His personal glory. With "*anyone who goes too far*" are meant the false teachers, who claim to have and to bring more light, new epiphanies, something

new that was unknown before. Many people in their mistakes have gotten entangled because of the believable but deceitful speech of these false teachers.

'Going too far' is to go beyond a limit that God has determined. He "*who goes too far*" goes beyond the Divine revelation and in that way deviates from what God has made known. Going too far is adding something to God's Word, which will certainly be judged by God (*Rev 22:18*). It is not a progress but falling away. He who is not satisfied with the truth of God in Christ and for that reason goes further than that truth, will lose it. To go beyond the inspired Word by exchanging it for fabrications of the human spirit means not to have God. On the other hand, he who abides in the doctrine has the highest, deepest and most intimate revelation of the Godhead.

V10. John points out that when someone comes at the lady's door who does *not* bring the doctrine of Christ, she is not to receive him in her house and is also not to greet him. He forbids any support here to all who deny in their doctrine that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God Who became Man. To accommodate and give food to such people means that she spends her time, strength and means for the advance of false teachings. In that way she supports the devil with his despicable work.

You are not to open your door to false teachers. You are not to allow your house to be serving as a base for something that destroys Christendom. It is important to see that it is not so much about what the false teacher brings, with which false doctrine he comes, but what he does *not* bring. He does not bring the Son of the Father. In no way it is permitted to have any contact with such a person.

The greeting John is talking about, is not the simple greeting 'good morning' that you say to someone when you meet him and of whom you do not know whether he is a false teacher, for instance a Jehovah's witness. When you know that your neighbor or colleague belongs to the false sect of the Jehovah's witnesses,

your attitude toward him will be reserved. You may probably have no more contact with him than it is needed.

When your neighbor is in need of help you will not leave him alone. But as soon as your neighbor or colleague or an unfamiliar person comes at your door to impose his false doctrine on you, you must be radical and certainly must not wish him a 'good morning'. The man is making his way to advance evil doctrines. When you wish him a 'good morning' you wish him success in his wicked works and therefore have a part in it yourself. I assume that is not what you want. You are not to do anything that could give the impression that a false teaching is something insignificant. You must keep yourself far away from everything that gives the false teacher the opportunity to influence others.

V11. You cannot separate a person from his wicked works. To bring a wicked doctrine is doing a wicked work and a wicked doctrine results in wicked works. Fellowship with the person is fellowship with the works. A greeting means having fellowship with his person and with everything that is in him, in this case also with his wicked works.

It goes without saying that in the church both the false teacher and the one who receives him or greets him, is not to partake of Christian fellowship and therefore certainly not of the Lord's Supper. He who partakes of a church where a false doctrine is being proclaimed or where evil practices occur, which are not judged by that church and which are not removed from their midst (*1Cor 5:13b*), cannot be allowed to partake of the Table of the Lord. Such a person must first purify himself of those practices by withdrawing himself from them (*2Tim 2:19-22*) and then he can partake of the Lord's Supper.

He who thinks that he can stay in a fellowship and can even partake of the Lord's Supper there where these things occur, indicates to be indifferent toward evil. It may be the case that he himself does not partake of them, that he even condemns these things, and even resist against them. However, when a person does not do anything with the evil and lets it happen, he cannot

possibly stay there with a free conscience. To him the call applies: “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues” (Rev 18:4).

V12. John could have written more, but he has limited himself to write the most necessary, what has direct relevance. God’s Spirit has made sure that he has written down what is important for the church in all ages. He would like to share with her what he has more on his mind when he will meet her (*cf. 1Cor 11:34*). John longs to see her face to face and to rejoice together with her in the blessings of the Christian faith that have become their part in Christ. The joy that is found therein is perfect (*1Jn 1:4*). Exactly the thought of joy in time of need and confusion, an end time, is very encouraging. John writes this letter with a view to that time (*1Jn 2:18*).

V13. John concludes his letter by conveying to the lady the greetings of her nephews and nieces who are apparently with him. The nephews and nieces have a good relationship with their aunt. By the way, this is a proof that it is about persons here and that with the addressed lady is not meant a church in veiled terms. The sister is just like the lady to whom John is writing, an elect lady (*see verse 1*). That election is not a hidden matter. John also sees in her life the proofs of it.

In that way others may talk about you and the other way around. That does not make a person proud, but rather humble. It implies the awareness that God did something with you, which was already established before the foundation of the world (*Eph 1:4*). Was there anything in you that could have been a reason for it to happen? It also gives a great security that He knows you, in spite of what you are in yourself. The only thing you can do is to ascribe all honor to Him in great gratitude.

Now read 2 John :8-13 again.

Reflection: What is ‘the doctrine of Christ’?

The Third Letter of John

Introduction

The *third letter of John* shows the tenderness of love that comes to expression in the support towards those who have gone forth for the sake of the truth. It is the other side of what you have seen in the second letter. That letter deals more with the steadfastness of love in refusing to give hospitality to false teachers. You may summarize the message of the second letter in the words: 'Do not receive!' (2Jn :10) and of the third letter in the word: 'Receive!' (*verse 8*).

If we would only have had the second letter, we would run the risk to become strict, insensitive and suspicious. Therefore the third letter is a necessary and at the same time wonderful supplement to the second letter. It causes the balance that is necessary in the judgment of what presents itself as being Christian.

Besides the order to receive the true servant of God, this letter also gives a vivid picture of the church life in the second part of the first century, with timeless instructions for the people of God.

It is also remarkable that in this letter the name of the Lord Jesus is not mentioned. In *verse 7* you indeed find a general reference to 'the Name'.

With some characteristics John portrays some people: the hospitable and spiritual Gaius, the commendable Demetrius and the self-interested uncompassionate Diotrephes. That also gives a good division of this letter:

1. *Verses 1-4* greeting.
2. *Verses 5-8* the God fearing Gaius.
3. *Verses 9-11* the dictator Diotrephes.

4. *Verses 12* the pious Demetrius.
5. *Verses 13-14* the plans of the apostle and blessing.

3 John

Sender, Recipients, Walk | verses 1-4

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. 2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, [that is,] how you are walking in truth. 4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

V1. “The elder” is John in his status as an old man. He writes to the “beloved Gaius”. Beloved is a word which he uses three more times, but it is missing in the second letter, which he wrote to a lady.

There are three persons in the New Testament to be found who are named ‘Gaius’ (1Cor 1:14; Rom 16:23; Acts 19:29; 20:4). None of these three person seems to be the man to whom John is writing. It is also not that important in order to understand the message of this letter. Of this particular Gaius, John writes five positive characteristics:

1. his soul prospers;
2. he has a good testimony;
3. it can be testified that ‘the truth’ is in him;
4. he walks in the truth;
5. he acts in faithfulness.

These are the characteristics that you may strive for that they may be found with you too.

John loves Gaius *"in truth"*. He certainly appreciates the hospitality of Gaius very much, but still, that is not the reason for him to love him. John does not love Gaius for natural reasons, but on the basis of the truth of God. It is a love between two persons who have the same Divine nature. That goes much further than only appreciating somebody for his hospitality. It means that the heart has been captured by the truth. It is about truth in the inner man, about truthfulness which is shown in a sincere act and walk.

V2. John starts with a personal wish to Gaius. That wish is not a small wish. He wishes Gaius that *"in all respects"* he *"may prosper"*, that means on every area of his life. Thereby the health of his soul is at the front. The health of his body, his appearance, is not unimportant, but that of his inner man is still more important.

It is not to be taken for granted that if your soul prospers your body automatically prospers. You could taste from what John is saying here, that there is no automatic connection between the condition of the soul and that of the body. The argument, that when your faith is alright it is automatically also alright with your body and you therefore do not need to become sick, is not correct.

You also need to be very careful with the reverse case, that when you are sick there must be something wrong with your faith. You are not to derive from the physical condition of a man how his spiritual condition is. The friends of Job have experienced that to their shame when God blamed them for the hard, judging words they spoke to Job.

V3. John can say that the soul of Gaius prospers because other people have told him about what they saw with Gaius. Some *"brethren"* came to John who have been with Gaius. These brethren have seen the way Gaius lives and that has impressed them. They told the old apostle about that. In their message they testified of *"your truth"*, that is the truth of God, which was accepted by Gaius and which he familiarized himself with (cf. *'his treasure'*,

Mat 13:52, where the Lord Jesus speaks about a person whom has familiarized himself with God's Word).

Therefore it is also applied to you that it is not the question about you having the truth, but it is about you to become identified with God's truth. God gives His truth to His own. That is being seen in the life of Gaius, in his words and deeds. That is something that others can testify of. You may read books about something and tell something about it, but that is not your truth. Your truth is what you have lived through of God's truth.

This has got nothing to do with what you indeed hear today, that everyone 'has his truth'. That refers to people who do not submit themselves to God's Word, but believe their own opinion about all kinds of things to be 'truth'. John speaks about the truth of God, but which becomes 'your truth' when you have familiarized yourself with it through faith and practice. You see that with Gaius. He 'walks in the truth'. The brethren testified of him that he walks in it, and therefore his whole life is in accordance with the revealed truth of God.

When John heard that from those brethren about Gaius, he "*was very glad*". Just like in *verse 4* of the second letter, here also 'rejoiced greatly' indicates the intense joy and the depth of compassion with the spiritual health of the other person. This great joy relates to what John heard about a fellow believer. That is not an opposite of the joy in the Lord, but it is on the contrary inseparably connected with it.

Hopefully you rejoice not only in the Father and the Son, but also in everything you see of the Lord Jesus in another person. You also rejoice when believers visit you and tell you good stories about other children of God. Unfortunately the stories are often more focused on what the brother lacks or what his failures are. Try to focus on the positive things that are present with your brother and sister.

John speaks about 'brethren' who came to him and not about some 'gentlemen'. 'Brethren' is an honorary title and is a lot more

affectionate than the distant 'sir' or 'madam' that at times is also used among believers. In the name 'brethren' you hear the sound of the family relationship of the believers that comes forth from the fact that they are children of God. It is also nice to consider that Gaius does not testify of himself. He does not need to.

We also should not speak about ourselves, about things we have done. *"Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips"* (Pro 27:2). You must always be cautious for the danger that you would boast on what you have done for the Lord (Mk 6:30). Of course you may tell about what God has done through you (Acts 14:27; 15:4,12). Look also at what the Lord testifies of the work of Mary, a testimony that was going to be borne further by others (Mat 26:13).

V4. For the old apostle there was no greater joy than to hear that his children *"walking in the truth"*. It is about walking in the truth of faith, the whole truth as we find that in the Scripture. It is not about accepting an orthodox truth of faith, but about what has become visible in your walk. That's what it is with Gaius who in spiritual sense is one of the children of John (cf. 1Cor 4:14-15).

Generally speaking, it is a fact that when John hears that his children walk in the truth, it gives him an unsurpassable joy. He rejoices in the Lord Jesus and therefore he rejoices in all who also rejoice in that Person. For that reason he speaks about *"no greater joy"*. This unsurpassable joy is therefore not only to be found in the fellowship with the Lord, but also in fellowship with one another.

This joy is nothing else than the joy of heaven. In heaven all God's children will behave themselves perfectly in accordance with God. Only the new life, which is the Lord Jesus, will be visible there. To each spiritual minded elder believer it is a joy which is non-replaceable or unsurpassable when he sees the features of the Lord Jesus in the lives of younger believers. To walk in the truth is to walk just as He has walked. He did everything just like God wanted Him to. Because He is the life of each child of God, it can also

become visible in each child of God. If you listen to the voice of the good Shepherd and follow Him, it will surely become visible.

Now read 3 John :1-4 again.

Reflection: Is it to be testified of you that you walk in the truth?
Why is it / is it not?

Go Forth For the Sake of the Name | verses 5-7

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

5 Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially [when they are] strangers; 6 and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. 7 For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

V5. After addressing Gaius as “beloved” in verse 2, John does that again here. In verse 11 he will do that once more. By that he convinces Gaius of his love for him. There is indeed a reason for that. Gaius has much that is commendable and therefore worthy as an example for you to follow. But what John mentions firstly, is his “acting faithfully”. Of all services the main characteristic is faithfulness, which is also appreciated and rewarded the most by God (1Cor 4:2). Not your gift or the results of a certain work that you do for the Lord, but the faithfulness with which you do everything, is important to Him.

Gaius has acted faithfully towards believers, brethren, whom were totally unknown to him. They unexpectedly stood on his doorstep. He did not get rid of them, but he did faithfully to them “whatever” he accomplished. In reality, the hospitality that Gaius showed to the brethren he showed to the Lord (see Mat 25:40). Hospitality is a responsibility and privilege for us all (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2), but especially for overseers (1Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8) and widows who are supported by the church (1Tim 5:10). Hospitality is not to be supplied reluctantly, grumbling, but wholeheartedly (1Pet 4:9).

These “brethren” were welcomed because they brought the truth. Probably they were poor brethren who came from a modest background and were uneducated, who were travelling in complete independence on the Lord. They looked upon Him for Whose Name’s sake they went forth. They were not appointed preach-

ers. They travelled without formal sending out and without visible source of income.

John does not address his letter to them, but to Gaius and over his head to all believers who want to be used by the Lord in order to support such travelling believers. They enjoy their ministry and they owe them to support them in their needs (*Gal 6:6*). Gaius acted according to the principle that “*you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing*” (*1Cor 9:9*). Although the church that Gaius joined seemed not to act accordingly and failed to do so, Gaius was still able to act like that in personal faithfulness.

The Scripture shows here that God attaches importance to proofs of love towards strangers. Many believers show love to workers for the Lord whom they know and admire, while they have a reserved attitude towards brothers of whom they have never heard, whom they do not know. When we discover that attitude with ourselves we are to confess and judge it.

V6. Beside the testimony that was given of the truth of Gaius (*verse 3*), also a testimony of his love can be given. “*Your truth*” (*verse 3*) and “*your love*” indicate that Gaius is balanced in living out his faith. It is a good thing to have the truth *in us*, but it is a better thing when the truth *manifests itself* in our life. We must not only keep the truth, but the truth must also keep us. We often fail in one of both sides. We either stand resolutely behind the truth, but are tough, without love, or we only talk about love, while we fail in maintaining the truth.

Gaius has welcomed the strangers in love and truth and has helped them further (*cf. Tit 3:13*). These strangers in their turn have testified of it. There is reciprocity in it. Hospitality causes a testimony. The brethren who were helped by Gaius testified before the church where they belonged of his effort for their sake. In their report of their journey they also told about how they were received by Gaius and how he assisted them in going forward (*cf. Acts 14:27*). They have testified in the meeting of God’s work which they have observed at other places and the service that was done to them by other believers. It must have been a joy for those

brethren to tell about the love of Gaius, who loved in deed and in truth (*1Jn 3:18*).

With the words “*you will do well*” John exhorts him to continue with this good work of assisting travelling brothers forward. In that way Paul exhorts the Philippian to add to the good that they already did (*Phil 2:1-2*; cf. *1Thes 4:9-10*). Gaius must have needed this exhortation too, because he was facing resistance from Diotrephes. Let this also be an exhortation for you when you are facing people who are trying to stop you from helping those who testify of the Lord.

“*Send them on their way*” means that he had to provide them with everything they needed to continue their service. When they departed from his place, after they enjoyed his hospitality, he must give them some money and goods for the journey. Gaius had to do that “*in a manner worthy of God*”. That excludes on the one hand dishonest motives and wrong intentions and on the other hand the Name of God becomes visible and is being glorified in his act, for he acts in the Name of God (*Phil 4:19*).

The Lord does not assist His servants with wages or a salary or a guaranteed income. They can trust in Him, Who is faithful. Whoever trusts in Him will be able to testify that he had never lacked of anything (*Lk 22:35*). The servant of Christ must be supported by the saints (*1Cor 9:1-18*; *Gal 6:6*), but not with a secure income (*Phil 4:11-12*). They are in the service of the Lord and He determines where His servants go and how long they are to stay somewhere. People are not allowed to determine that, although believers of course are allowed to give some advice (cf. *Acts 16:9-10*), when they for instance hear about a certain spiritual need. When the servant goes, he will do that after he had received clarity from the Lord that it is alright.

There is another thing that is attached to this ‘worthy of God’. Wherever this expression appears in the New Testament it has got to do with the character of the letter (*1Thes 2:12*; *Col 1:10*; *Eph 4:1*; *Phil 1:27*; *Rom 16:2*). That also is the case here. The main point in the letters of John is the eternal life, which is the Lord Jesus, Who

also is the true God (1Jn 5:20). Therefore when John exhorts Gaius to continue to assist others forward in a manner that is 'worthy of God', it means a way that is in accordance with God Who is light and love.

That excludes that we would praise servants by only looking at them for what we love about them and therefore look at them only from the perspective of love. It also excludes that we reject servants by only looking at them for what we do not like about them and therefore only from the perspective of the light. Worthy of God means that we approach servants and judge their service in accordance with light and love. Of course we are allowed to encourage or admonish servants, but the balance is important. Briefly said 'worthy of God' means that the life of God in you and me towards the servant reveals itself in an honorable manner.

V7. The reason for appreciating the act of Gaius and the exhortation for him to continue that is that these strangers have gone forth "*for the sake of the Name*". I think that you may say that in 'the Name' everything is expressed about what the Son of God is. John does not need to declare to Gaius what he means. It is totally clear. It is *all* about that Name.

In this letter the name of the Lord Jesus or of the Father does not appear at all. There is no need to mention Their names, for it is totally clear to both John and Gaius that it is only about the Father and the Son. When you talk with somebody about a person who is precious to both you and the other one, you do not mention his name all the time, for by everything that you say you both know of whom you are talking about.

The most important thing for you and me should be His Name as the only Name. It must not be the name of a church or one or another person (*cf. 1Cor 1:10-13*). His Name is the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Because of Him these travelling brothers have forsaken their profession to heed His call, just like John himself also did formerly (*Mk 1:19-20*). They were not sent by or in the name of men. The church has no authority to choose, consecrate or send out servants of the Lord. Only the Lord Jesus has that

right. The church will surely acknowledge those with joy who are called and being sent out like that (*Acts 14:27*).

Those who are gone forth for His Name's sake are not dependent on those to whom they are sent out. The Lord finances His own work. Fundraising is not in accordance with what we find here. We must never give the impression that money plays a role in the preaching or that it is about financial profit. That will cloud the preaching or even destroy it. On the other hand it is indeed important to realize that you have an obligation towards preachers who go forth with the confidence in the living God and who tell their needs to no one else than Him alone.

The preachers about whom John writes here do not accept anything from those who belong to the Gentiles. They leave it to God to care that they will be received by those who attaches great importance to the truth. The truth is and still is the only letter of faith among the Christians and also the only means through which the apostle can protect the believers.

Now read 3 John :5-7 again.

Reflection: What do you pay attention to with those who say to preach the truth and how do you help them forward who preach God's truth?

Diotrephes, Demetrius and the Friends | *verses 8-15*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

8 Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth. 9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire [to do so] and puts [them] out of the church. 11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. 12 Demetrius has received a [good] testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. 13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write [them] to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. 15 Peace [be] to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

V8. When John has told Gaius what he would do well, he involves himself in the exhortation by speaking of “we”. He, John, ought to receive them like every other believer who has gone forth for the Name. In this way he shows that he not only tells the other person to do something, but he himself does it too in practice. He gives the good example. That is the best way to encourage one another in practical love. This exhortation forms an enormous contrast with the previous letter, wherein you were told that the least involvement in the advancement of a false doctrine causes you to have fellowship with evil works.

By supporting believers who preach God’s Word, in a practical way you become ‘a fellow worker with the truth’. In that way each person, including you, has an own place and function in the advancement of the truth. This is how the Philippians became fellow workers of the gospel through the gift that they sent to the apostle (*Phil 1:5; 4:15*). They probably were no evangelists,

but they cooperated with that work, for without their support the work could not be continued. He who works and he who supports receive the same reward from the Lord (*Mat 10:41*).

V9. Gaius needs this encouragement because there is some Diotrephes in the church. Because the church is responsible for what happens in its midst, John "*wrote something to the church*". That letter in which he writes about receiving those who preach the truth is anyway not written to Diotrephes, although he wanted to be the head of the church. The letter that John Gaius refers to has not been preserved for us.

Diotrephes is someone who 'loves to have the preeminence among them' (*Mat 20:26*), but does not do that the way the Lord instructs us to. Loving to have the preeminence or loving to be the first is an evil that hides in us all. The Lord indicates with the example of the foot washing how He is and how He wants us, who call Him Master and Lord, to be (*Jn 13:1-20*).

Diotrephes loves to be the first. He acts out of love for taking sides and his own honor which is therefore fully in contrast with the mind of the Lord Jesus (*Phil 2:3-4*). He even goes that far that he does not receive the apostles. According to the first letter it is a sign that he is not of God, for he who is of God, hears the apostles (*1Jn 4:6*). This person Diotrephes loves to have the preeminence in influence and authority and therefore he puts himself above the believers. There is no reason to assume that he in a way adheres to anti-Christian doctrines. The important thing for him is himself.

It is interesting to see that there are person in the Bible with names that indicate a rank order. In that way there is mention of a 'brother named Quartus' (means 'fourth', *Rom 16:23*), one called 'Tertius' (means 'third', *Rom 16:22*) and one called 'Secundus' (means 'second', *Acts 20:4*). However, a person by the name of 'Primus' ('first') is not to be found. That name is only to be ascribed to the Lord Jesus, for He is the One Who in all things has the first place (*Col 1:18*). Diotrephes arrogates this place to himself. He "*loves to be the first*".

The contrast between Gaius and Diotrephes is great. Gaius walks in truth and love, loves the brethren and he even serves strangers. Diotrephes walks in pride, loves himself and hates servants who bring God's truth. Both of them are in the same church. How often this situation has already repeated itself in the history of Christianity!

V10. John informs Gaius about some things concerning Diotrephes. He says that Diotrephes will experience the power of the apostle. This is not a way for John to make an impact. He will act with apostolic authority. He does not arrogate himself to put things in order by a command. Everything that John does is drawing the attention to the truth, even when a woman is concerned, like in his second letter.

He will confront Diotrephes with "*his deeds*" that are in contrast with the truth. The whole issue about whether or not receiving preachers is actually only determined by the doctrine that they bring. Do they not bring the truth? Then do not greet them. Do they bring the truth? Then receive them, in spite of all the Diotrophesses in the world.

Besides the fact that Diotrephes does evil works, he also talks nonsense. His "*wicked words*" are senseless, they have no ground at all. They are expressed in a wicked mind and are evil of contents.

He does not use only words. Out of his practices it seems that he is an evil man. He does not want to have anything to do with true servants, for he sees them as a threat for his own position. Therefore he refuses to accept their message and in that way also their Sender. He rejects them. He regards himself highly and despises others. He is like the one who starts to beat his fellow slaves (*Mat 24:49*). The man may probably have had a good start, but later he became an enemy of God's work and therefore of Christ. He cannot stand to see another person get more honor than he himself. This is what happened to king Saul too (*1Sam 18:6-9*).

As a real sect leader he and he alone determines that no one is allowed to receive the true servant of God. Diotrephes seems to have taken in such a dominant position, that he independently throws everyone out of the church who does not agree to his policy and is disobedient to his commandment not to receive the brethren. To be thrown out of the church means to be refused access to the local church, for no one can remove another from the body of Christ.

Diotrephes has declared himself a dictator who sustains his power by intimidating the members of the church. What do they have to do with strange and probably less intelligent brethren? He is there anyway?

However, when a person brings the truth, we are to receive him. It is even very important that we listen to different brothers and to hear the Word from them. Each brother is limited and one-sided. The church is not served when it always has to listen or wants to listen to one and the same person only. There are to be possibilities for exercising different gifts.

V11. After portraying the situation with regard to Diotrephes and towards the total lack of love with Diotrephes, it must have been alleviating for the suffering that Gaius had to endure, John again addresses him with 'beloved'. John appeals to him not to imitate "*what is evil*", but in contrast with that to follow "*what is good*" (1Pet 2:21). We are to overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21). What is evil is presented in Diotrephes in the previous verses, what is good is presented in Demetrius in the following verse.

In the second part of *verse 11* you hear again the absolute language of John. Although we have to do with a poor travelling brother, the point is when he "*does good*", if that is his characteristic, then it means that he has new life and he is of God. The same goes for doing evil. "*The one who does evil*" and walks in an evil way has no fellowship with God, although he has the preeminent place in the church or when he claims that to himself, like Diotrephes.

V12. John draws Gaius' attention to Demetrius. Demetrius seems to be one of the travelling brethren. He may probably be the person who came to deliver the testimony to John, regarding Gaius and the church. He also proclaims the truth. He has a good testimony, not only from the believers, but also from those who are outside (1Tim 3:7). The word "all" actually may refer to both believers and unbelievers (cf. 1Thes 1:8). He has two kinds of witnesses: all people who know him, and the truth. The truth is as it were a person.

The fruit of his service testifies that he has brought the truth. His life is a continual expression of the truth. When someone looked at Demetrius and then at the truth, he saw that what Demetrius did met with what the truth prescribes. Also John testifies of him, as an emphasis of the previous testimonies. He presumes that Gaius will accept his testimony as truthful and not as untruthful or that he would reject it as insignificant.

V13-14. Just like he did in the second letter John concludes this writing with a personal note. He does not want to write him only, but he hopes to meet Gaius soon and then talk with him further. Talking with one another is the best way to have fellowship. Whatever means we may use to have contact (paper, telephone, e-mail etc.), it is not the real substitution for the face to face contact. It is sad when in a local church the disagreements are being dealt with through letters by email and not by a face to face conversation.

V15. His wish to Gaius "*peace [be] to you*" is extra necessary in this church where Diotrophes is active and where there must have been great discontent. Nevertheless it is still possible to have personal peace in the heart in such a situation (Jn 14:27; 20:19,26). This does not mean that there is some indifference with regard to a person like Diotrophes, but a confidence in God that He at His time (here by the coming of John) will make an end to that situation.

John calls the brethren here "*friends*". This is how the Lord has called His disciples (Jn 15:13-15; cf. Jn 11:11; Acts 27:3). It expresses

an intimate relation and affection. In German the word for hospitality is 'Gastfreundschaft', which literally means 'guest friendship' which contains the word 'friendship'. Hospitality makes friends out of brothers. Friendship relationships come into being.

There are friends with John and there are friends with Gaius. Those friends do not form an impersonal group, but there is a special bond with each of them. You know friends "by name". That expression only appears once more in *John 10:3*, where you read that the Lord Jesus knows His sheep "by name". In this you see John obviously is a good imitator of the good Shepherd.

While John has ended his second letter with a family greeting, he ends this third letter with a greeting of friends.

Now read 3 John :8-15 again.

Reflection: Which characteristics does Diotrephes have and which does Demetrius have?

The Letter of Jude

Introduction

The *letter of Jude* is a brief and powerful letter. When you read the letter, you notice the drive of a prophet. God's Spirit has used Jude to describe the evil in Christianity and the judgment over it at the coming of the Lord Jesus in the forward-looking speech of the prophets.

The picture that you are presented here of Christianity is not directly a picture that makes you happy, but it is the reality. If you were withheld from that reality you would have missed the necessary warnings that should help you to acknowledge the attacks on God's truth. But at the same time Jude encourages you. He actually points at the unfaltering faithfulness and omnipotence of God and the Lord Jesus to those who are willing to hold on to the truth that has been transmitted to them and to defend it against the attacks.

When you read this letter and compare it with *chapter 2 of the second letter of Peter*, then you see that certain issues occur in both letters. Still, these same issues are presented from a different point of view. Peter addresses Jewish Christians and speaks about sin and unrighteousness. Jude addresses all Christians and speaks about the apostasy of the Christian truth, the abandonment of the most holy faith.

Jude

Sender, Recipients, Purpose of the Letter | *verses 1-3*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: 2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. 3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

V1. Jude presents himself as “*a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James*”. At the explanation of the letter of James we saw that James is a brother of the Lord Jesus (*Jam 1:1; Gal 1:19*). Besides a James we also come across a Jude among the brothers of the Lord after the flesh (*Mat 13:55*). It is obvious that he is the author of this letter.

Just like James, Jude does not call himself ‘a brother’ of Jesus Christ, but joyfully calls himself a ‘bond-servant’. He neither speaks about ‘Jesus’, but about ‘Jesus Christ’. Every familiarity is missing, although he and James were raised together with the Lord in the same parental home. That undoubtedly has got to do with the fact that they have learnt to know Him as the Resurrected (*1Cor 15:7*). It is more important to be spiritually related to Him and to show that by listening to His Word than to be with Him in a natural family relationship (*Lk 11:27-28*).

As it already has been noticed, in his letter Jude address all believers without distinction. He calls them “*those who are the called*”. He has the interest of all believers in mind, all who belong to the worldwide church. At the same time the letter is also very per-

sonal, for a calling is a personal matter of every believer. Those who are called – and therefore by grace you too are included – he presents directly at the beginning of his letter in a twofold regard: first to “*God the Father*” and then to “*Jesus Christ*”. The regard to God the Father is related with love and the regard to Jesus Christ with preservation.

What Jude does here lies in the same line as what the Lord Jesus does in His prayer to His Father when He asks Him to keep those who are His own (*Jn 17:11*). What Jude is saying and what the Lord Jesus has prayed is, with a view to the content of the letter, very encouraging. You may know that you are an object of Divine love, no matter how much evil has penetrated Christianity. You may know that you will be preserved till the end by Jesus Christ, while the penetrated evil will be judged by Him. What an encouragement! That gives security and power to your faith that is being tested severely in the time of apostasy wherein you live.

V2. After addressing his readers Jude has a threefold wish to his readers, “*mercy and peace and love*”. In addition he also wishes that it may be “*multiplied*”. We always find in the greeting of the letters of Paul ‘*grace and peace*’ as a wish. Only in the two *letters to Timothy* he adds the wish of ‘*mercy*’. That shows that ‘*mercy*’ is especially meant for individuals, which emphasizes the personal character of the *letter of Jude*.

The combination of the three wishes that Jude speaks out here, only occurs with him.

- He begins with “*mercy*”. In this word you find the aspect of need and compassion. Jude knows that the believers especially need that, with a view to the time that he will describe right away.
- Also “*peace*” is important in such a time. All evil that has entered into the church abundantly, may be a reason to get filled with dissatisfaction. When everything seems to be hopeless and there seems to be no way out, dissatisfaction can easily creep in.

- Finally “love” is needed. How evil the times may be, the believer may always be aware of the love of God.

Jude mentions these things in general terms. Of course he wishes them to you because of God. At the same time it is the intention that these characteristics will also be expressions that are coming out of you to others in a time of decay. After all, you have the new life, you are born of God and you have His nature. When the apostasy will be manifested more and more clearly, then it is more urgently desirable that these expressions of God’s care are to be found toward one another among the believers. And Jude does not only wish that they will increase, but that they will be in abundance by multiplication, meaning that they may increase more and more.

V3. Jude calls his readers “beloved” and in this way he participates with God the Father of Whom he has said that He loves the ones that He owns (*verse 1*). He has the same feelings for them as God the Father has. It is important to see your brothers and sisters the way God the Father sees them and to feel for them what He feels for them.

Jude tells that he was intended to write them a letter. He indeed carries out that intention. He also tells them about what he wanted to write to them, but that something has changed. He would have loved to share with them what he and they possess in common in the salvation that they have received (*cf. 2Pet 1:1*). However, the wish to write about the “common salvation” had been replaced by a burden that God’s Spirit has placed in his heart. He has been obedient to that and has acknowledged the necessity to write an exhortation instead of about enjoyable truths.

He tells about this change in his plan, because this makes you feel the seriousness of the content of his letter even more. It shows that sometimes plans need to be changed and that instead of enjoying the truths of faith these truths of faith are to contend for.

The faith – this refers to the truth of faith and not so much to your personal faith – is extremely precious. It is everything that

you know of God in Christ, just as you have it in the inspired, infallible, authoritative and complete Word of God. Therefore it also has to be maintained and defended as such. Everything that comes from God will always be attacked and must therefore be defended. You are to hold on to it that only to the apostles it has been given to determine the touch stones of the faith in the inspired scriptures.

To explain and teach the faith is not the task of all, but of the gifts who are given by the Lord Jesus (*Eph 4:11*). But it is certainly the task of each believer, therefore also of you, to defend the faith and to contend for it. That is not a matter of only a few. It is after all the faith which was "*once for all handed down to the saints*", which includes *all* saints and not only a small group of privileged people. The result is that all saints are to defend it. The expression 'saints' also emphasizes the contrast with the ungodliness of the ungodly men about whom Jude writes in the following verses.

What you are to be defending is the faith that 'once for all' was delivered. Therefore it is not about a new discovered faith or a faith that is developing and to which new things are continually being added to. It was once for all and fully manifested by God. Men are not to contribute anything to it, although they are the instruments through which it has been passed on. There will be no more new revelations. Once it was noted like this: If it is new, it cannot be true and if it is true, it is not new.

Now read Jude :1-3 again.

Reflection: Which encouragements do you find in these verses?

Examples of Apostasy and God's Judgment | verses 4-9

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. 5 Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. 8 Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. 9 But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

V4. Jude is now going to explain and support his appeal to contend. In case you may already have considerations whether you will or will not participate in the fight for which he appeals you to, you will get convinced of the necessity of your effort by his explanation. In an impressive way he portrays the situation of the confessing Christianity just as it already developed itself in those days. That development has not stopped since then, but it got worse more and more. That means that the necessity to contend has only been increasing more and more.

For "*certain persons*", which means men with a certain character, "*have crept in*", very secretly, with a deception, through a side door (cf. Gal 2:4). Those people are no believers. They are emphatically called "*ungodly persons*" by Jude. They are men "*who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation*". That does

not mean that their names are written, but it means that men who do such things will be struck by this judgment. The judgment was announced by Enoch already many centuries ago, even before the flood. Then God already made known what He was going to do with these ungodly men at the end of the time (*see verses 14-15*).

There are men, including earnest children of God, who from what Jude is saying here, conclude that God has predestined men to be perished. But this conclusion is not in line with the doctrine of the Scripture. God does not predestine anyone to be perished forever. The predetermined condemnation regards people who have prepared *themselves* for the destruction (*see Rom 9:22; 2Pet 2:3*). It is to be compared with the fine that I get when I for instance park my car somewhere without buying a ticket, which may result in the payment of a fine. When I park my car on that spot without buying a ticket, I am condemned to get a fine. The condemnation is ready for everyone who commits this violation, but there is only mention of registering names when the violation had been committed.

Jude is not cautious with his exposure of these people. He does not make gradual steps to come to that point, but he criticizes them directly. He does that to directly make their character clear and in that way open the eyes of the gullible people in the church for these corrupt persons. Such people present themselves as Christians and have sweet talks, as you will see later. Jude is quite clear. They are “*ungodly men*”, who destroy the faith. They have two main characteristics. The first characteristic is that they misuse grace by using it as a cover for fulfilling their own lusts. The second characteristic is that they reject the authority of the Lord Jesus.

That they are ‘ungodly’ (the word ‘ungodly’ appears seven times in this letter), means that they are without any respect and fear for God. That attitude is expressed in the two mentioned characteristics. They dare to misuse grace in order to justify their lawlessness (*see and compare Titus 2:12* where grace teaches the opposite). They abuse the Christian freedom to lead a life “*in licentiousness*”.

They lack every sense of what is appropriate. They also “deny” and despise the absolute and Divine authority of the Lord Jesus.

Therefore you can recognize these persons, who “crept in unnoticed”, by their way of life. It is absolutely out of the question that they could be born again. They live just like man has lived apart from God since the fall. They follow the lusts of the flesh to which they give in into lewdness and live their life in pride just as they want to. They also totally do not take into consideration the authority of the absolute Ruler, “our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”. You especially notice that by the way they deal with God’s Word. They do not have any respect for it, they do not bow to it, it does not impress them in any way.

V5. From that same Word that is being denied by them Jude wants to remind you of three cases from the beginning of the Old Testament. In these three cases the apostasy he speaks about and God’s judgment over it are clearly shown.

You are being addressed as someone who “knows all things once for all”. That is true to each believer, also for you, no matter how long you have been converted. For you have the “anointing of the Holy One” and you “know all things” (1Jn 2:20). After a course of time the awareness of it may sink away. Then it is good to be reminded of it.

The first case is that of the people of Israel when they were delivered from Egypt. God had delivered the people and promised them the land of Canaan. This promise also included that He was going to help them to take the land into possession. But when the people listened to the evil rumor that the ten spies spread about the promised land, they went into rebellion against the Lord and did not believe Him. They flatly refused to take that land into possession (Num 13-14; 1Cor 10:5-10) and in that way they showed their unbelief. They marginalized God.

After God had dealt with them by grace by delivering them from Egypt, He dealt “subsequently” with them on the ground of their unbelief. The result was that all died who were twenty years

old and older when they left Egypt, except for Joshua and Caleb (*Num 14:29-30,35; Heb 3:16-19*).

V6. The second example of rebellion and apostasy is that of angels who had sinned horribly. They did not keep “*their own domain*”, which means their original or lofty status, “*but abandoned their proper abode*”, which God had given them. It seems that this case is to be found in *Genesis 6:1-7*. There is mention of “*God’s sons*” of whom we know from *Job 1:6* and *2:1* that these are angels. These sons have adapted a human form and took wives out of men.

This evil is that bad that God has withheld them from any freedom of movement. He now already has reserved them with “*eternal bonds*”, those are chains which they will carry forever, and has locked them up in “*darkness*” already, so that they will never see the light again. They are “*kept*” there till the definite judgment over them will be carried out.

V7. The third example is directly connected to the previous one, which you can derive from the word “*just as*” with which *verse 7* begins. What had happened in “*Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them*” is of the same corruptness like what the angels did, though even worse. It causes the apostasy to reach a pinnacle. It is about the most outrageous shamelessness, a shamelessness which is directed against all that is natural, given by God. This particular perversion is that of the homosexual relationship of men who “*in their desire toward one another*” commit “*indecent acts*” (*Rom 1:26b-27*). They have left their own nature. That is rebellion and apostasy. That is ‘sexual immorality’ and going after “*strange flesh*”, which means that it is completely against the natural order of God.

The non-committed liberal life style, promoted by liberals and the pressure to fully accept a homosexual life style as a ‘normal’ life style, are compared with the practices of ‘Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them’. What God has done with those cities shows His judgment over homosexual practice. This should be a warning to everyone who lives like that or who accepts that as normal and who probably even fights for general acceptance.

The “*punishment of eternal fire*” shows that there is no end to God’s judgment over that. All apostates will be struck by this judgment.

In the three examples you do not find a chronological, but a spiritual order. The apostates will

1. just like the Israelites who did not believe, die the physical death,
2. then just like the angels who did not keep their proper domain, be reserved under darkness for the judgment before the great white throne and
3. finally, just like Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around it, be thrown in the eternal fire.

V8. After these examples of apostasy and God’s judgment over it, Jude returns to his theme of the apostates of his time. The whole thinking of those people is unclean. They are “*dreaming*”, they live in a fantasy world with filthy fantasies. They ultimately find the fulfillment of their dreams in disgusting sexual sins, just like the men of Sodom. They live in rebellion against God and reject every form of authority ordained by Him. They also speak blaspheming language about everything that God has ascribed a certain honor to, a certain glory in which something of Him is to be seen.

V9. These people have the brutality to say things that even “*Michael the archangel*” did not dare to say “*when he disputed with the devil*”, when he “*argued about the body of Moses*”. Jude tells about this event which is nowhere to be found in the Bible. He received this information through God’s Spirit. We know that God has buried Moses in a valley in the land of Moab and that nobody knows about his grave (*Deu 34:6*). It is not unlikely that the devil was looking for the place where Moses was buried, with the intention to let it be known by the people in order to cause them to make it a place of pilgrimage, which is a place of idolatry, for the people. Michael resisted against him on that.

In the future Michael will appear to be stronger than the devil, for he will throw him out of heaven (*Rev 12:7-9*). Michael knows his time to act against the devil and therefore he does not grab ahead about that. That's why he does not dare to put a "*railing judgment*" into his mouth towards this prince of angels in the kingdom of darkness. The archangel leaves the judgment over blasphemy by the devil, to the Lord. Look also at the attitude of David towards Saul for a moment when Saul was already rejected by God. As long as Saul is ruling David adopts a submissive attitude (*see 1Sam 24; 26*).

There is a danger that we may want to exercise power over those who are doing the work of the devil. Therefore it is necessary that we bear in mind what is written in the Scripture: "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord*" (*Rom 12:19*). We may also learn from the attitude of Michael that we should not mock the devil and think that we can make him ridiculous by giving him all kinds of contemptible names, as it happens sometimes.

Now read Jude :4-9 again.

Reflection: How can you recognize people who have crept in unnoticed?

Characteristics of Ungodliness | verses 10-16

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

10 But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. 11 Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. 12 These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. 14 [It was] also about these men [that] Enoch, [in] the seventh [generation] from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." 16 These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their [own] lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of [gaining an] advantage.

V10. Again Jude uses that contemptuous "these". In contrast to Michael these apostates audaciously and recklessly "revile the things which they do not understand". That is arrogance and pride all over. Naturally they have a knowledge which is also present with "unreasonable animals". This knowledge regards to the natural instincts, needs which they do have, like eating and drinking and sexuality. Animals act after their nature, their instinct. They cannot think, for they have no mind. These people act in the same way like animals do. But just because they are supposed to be able to think of what they do, while they contrarily still act like animals in fulfilling their lusts, they abase themselves and destroy themselves in their way of acting. With the lack of the mind of animals they indulge in sexual satisfaction.

V11. The “*woe*” is spoken out over them, which is the only time that we find it spoken out in the letters. It is the language of the book of the final judgments, the book of *Revelation*. On the basis of some old testament ungodly men Jude describes the way that leads to this ‘woe’.

They have “*gone the way of Cain*”. They are like Cain and his way, that is the way of a religion that does not come from God’s righteousness, but from their own righteousness. Cain was the first who went this way and this way is still extremely popular. He believed in God, but he thought of honoring God in his own way, with his own ‘good works’ (*Gen 4:3-8*). God had to be satisfied with that. He did not think for a moment of coming with a bloody sacrifice. God Himself showed that after the fall (*Gen 3:21*) which was understood by Abel (*Gen 4:4*). This attitude of Cain, serving God with good works, an attitude which is normal with Gentiles, has crept in into Christianity and has been followed up by countless people.

The next step is “*the error of Balaam*” (*Num 22:7; 31:16*). That implies their self-enrichment in the service of God. Balaam called himself a prophet of God, but he was greedy and wanted to trade his prophetic gift for money, which implied that he was willing to curse God’s people for money.

Like Balaam today’s false teachers are also good in using the tongue and speak for money what the people want to hear. They manipulate the truth for the sake of money. In that way they turn the house of God into a commercial market. To make merchandise out of the good that comes from God occurs frequently in Christianity, especially in the roman-catholic church where all the so-called blessings from birth to death cost money. Even the situation after death becomes a source of profit, for people are enabled to shorten their time by the fabrication of ‘purgatory’ with a duration that is dependent on the amount that is being paid.

The third and last step in the apostasy is the unmitigated rebellion against God, such as to be seen “*in the rebellion of Korah*” (*Num 16:19-35*). Korah rejected God’s election of the priesthood and in

that way His authority. He wanted to have the function of priest himself and wanted to take the place of mediator, through which he could exercise control over God's people. We see that also in the roman-catholicism all over. God's judgment was executed over him and his companions. They descended in the realm of death alive.

All these three persons have in common that they arrogated something to themselves which they were not. In Cain we see a *false worshipper*, in Balaam a *false prophet* and in Korah a *false priest*. The apostasy of each of them had to do with religion. Also here the rank order is not chronological but spiritual: Cain *went*, Balaam *ran greedily* and Korah *perished*. It is a frame of a spiritual downturn and the end of the people who are concerned.

V12. It is as if Jude is tiring himself out in looking for examples in order to make clear to you what kind of people these apostates are. In order to present the character and destiny of those apostates more clearly, he uses some examples from nature in *verses 12-13*.

The first example is that of "*reefs*". The word 'reefs' is derived from the word 'cliffs', which are rocks below the sea level, that may cause boats to sink when the helmsman does not watch carefully. He calls the apostates "*reefs in your love feasts*". 'Love feasts' are the fellowship meals that the first Christians connected to the Lord's Supper (*see 1Cor 11:20*).

With these apostates, however, there is nothing to be found of Christian love and fellowship. During the love feasts they only think of themselves. They "*feast*", without any fear to be found improper or greedy. They are feeding themselves shamelessly and in that way are the evident opposite of the Lord Who is seeking the well-being of the sheep. In *Ezekiel 34*, a chapter that deals with false shepherds, the 'woe' is spoken out over them (*Eze 34:2*).

These people probably have, while enjoying all the goodies, spoken out all their edifying thoughts with nice talks. They have given a swirling show, but it seemed to be nothing more than

the sparkling of soap bubbles. It promised to be a refreshment like clouds are expected to be producing water (the next example from nature), but they are “*clouds without water*”. They form a great contrast to Moses who as his desire regarding to his words, speaks out the following to God’s people: “*Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew*” (Deu 32:2; cf. Isa 55:10).

There is no handhold in what they say, for they are “*carried along by winds*”. They behave themselves inconsistently and constantly come with other ideas, which do not make sense. They leave only disenchantment and hopelessness behind. What a difference with what Paul wishes to the believers: “*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all [aspects]*” (Eph 4:14-15; see also Heb 13:9)!

They are like “*autumn trees without fruit*”, meaning trees out of which the life has gone and therefore are not expected to be producing fruit. They are “*doubly dead*”. In the first place they are “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph 2:1) and in the second place they are dead in their confession, for therein all life lacks.

They are dead from the root, there is in no way connection with life, which also cannot possibly flow, for they have been cut off from the root. They have been “*uprooted*”. In this way the promised fruit will never come, just like the promised water from the clouds will never come. Such trees are to be cut down (Lk 13:9). These people are like trees which have been pulled up by the roots, which means that they have been taken away from the place of which they confessed to have taken in. The only thing that is left for trees that have been pulled up by the root is the fire.

V13. The following example that Jude uses is that of the sea. He compares these people with “*wild waves of the sea*”. There is a complete uncontrollability with them like with a raging sea (cf. Isa 57:20). If you have ever seen a sea in the storm, you must also have seen white foamed waves, caused by the wind. Those white

foam is blown to the beach by the wind. The foam goes in all directions and finally there is nothing left of it.

This is what happens to these people and their doctrines. Despite the noise that they cause, they show nothing more than their own shameless deeds which are visible on the top of the waves and which are being blown to the beach. The white foam seems to refer to cleanness, but it is the whiteness of the whitewashed tombs (*Mat 23:27*). There is nothing left of it, they leave nothing behind that has any value.

In their whole performance they still want to give the impression that you can take their life as an example in order to determine your direction, but they are "*wandering stars*". They will end up where they live and that is in "*the black darkness*" and that will last "*forever*". They will never more be able to deceive anyone there and they will also never be able to enjoy anything.

V14. In the earliest days already there has been prophecies about these men, that they will be condemned. As a proof of that Jude quotes Enoch. In order not to confuse this Enoch with the other, the man with the same name who is a descendant of Cain (*Gen 4:17-18*), it is said of him that he is the "*seventh [generation] from Adam*". He "*prophesied*" about the coming of the Lord Jesus to bring judgment over the ungodly apostates.

This prophecy of Enoch is only to be found in this letter. In the Old Testament we do not find it. God's Spirit has also revealed this to Jude (the same that is written in *verse 9*). Enoch prophesied in his days about the coming of Christ for judgment, whereby He will be accompanied by "*many thousands of His holy ones*", which include all the redeemed of all times. This judgment has had a fulfillment in advance in the flood.

It is a nice thought that Enoch himself was taken away by God before the flood, without seeing death (*Heb 11:5*). In that way he is a picture of the church that will also be taken up into heaven before the judgments hit the earth. The believers will not come into judgment (*Jn 5:24*).

V15. The judgment will be executed over all unbelievers. Christ will judge all *works* as well as all *words* of the ungodly sinners. Do you see how the Holy Spirit emphasizes the nature of ungodliness? The people are ungodly, just like their deeds and ways and their harsh words which they “*have spoken against Him*”. Therefore every soul that has committed that sin will be personally punished by Him. Because judgment does not directly follow after the deed, it may seem that God forgets to punish and man keeps on doing evil (see *Ecc 8:11*). But the day will come to pay the bill.

V16. Their ungodly words have been uttered in grumbling language. They are dissatisfied, they always want more or differently, they complain about their destiny. They always blame God. Why does He allow the wars and miseries to happen? If He is that almighty, why does not He change the world?

Those are people who are “*following after their [own] lusts*”. They always seek to fulfill their passions. They speak “*arrogantly*”, using sensationalizing language, words that are haughtily and hypocritically spoken out. They crawl for people who are above them and they flatter them purely out of selfishness, in order to benefit personally. Meanwhile they follow their own hidden agenda, for they do not care about others. Only the ‘I’ is important.

Now read Jude :10-16 again.

Reflection: Which examples of ungodliness does Jude present in these verses?

Exhortations and Encouragements | verses 17-25

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 18 that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." 19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting; 23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. 24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, 25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, [be] glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

V17. Jude has extensively described the characteristics of the apostate ungodly men. With the words "but you" he again addresses the believers. Just like he did in *verse 3*, he again addresses them with "beloved". He tells them that they should not have to be surprised that there are such people, like he previously described, among them. They only have to remember what the apostles of "our Lord Jesus Christ" have said. If they only take that to heart they will be kept from being involved with these people or allow themselves to be influenced by their mockeries and ungodly lusts.

You see that Jude refers to the inspired Scriptures, in which it is written what the apostles have said. Back to the Scripture and not to human writings, how fundamental biblical they may be. In *Acts 20* you find warnings from the mouth of Paul concerning the act of people for whom Jude warns here (*Act 20:29-30*). Peter and John also write about such people (*2Pet 2:1; 3:3; 1Jn 2:18-19*).

V18. Their warning words come down to that “*in the last time there will be mockers*”. That time began when the Lord Jesus came to earth and was rejected and it will last until His return. This whole time is characterized – not by a submission of the world to the gospel, but – by the act of mockers who do whatever they like to and who do not take God into account at all. Their whole life is dominated by the fulfillment of “*their own ungodly lusts*”.

V19. The people whom Jude is talking about are incorrigible. Because they have no part in what the believers have in common, they form their own group in the midst of the church. They separate themselves like the Pharisees and form a group in the church in order to carry out their evil works there. They feel themselves superior to others who in their eyes are narrow-minded and petty and therefore look down on them with disdain.

They are “*worldly-minded*”, which means that they are guided by their soul, their feelings and not like God intended them to be, by their mind in relation to Him. They have no new life, but they are and remain to be sensual people who live according to their lusts. Each trace of life from God is missing. They are not born again and therefore are people who are “*devoid of the Spirit*”. Whatever they may claim regarding their being Christians, their condition is not possibly the work of God’s Spirit.

Here we find the end of the verses that deal with apostasy and apostates wherein there is not one glimmer of hope of improvement. The judgment will break loose over them in full force at the return of the Lord Jesus with all His own.

V20. From *verse 20* Jude passes on a number of encouragements. In *verses 20-23* he does that in the form of exhortations and in *verses 24-25* in the form of a praise. The exhortations are seven in total of which four refer to you personally and three to your relation towards others.

The exhortations are again introduced with the words “*but you, beloved*”. It again marks the contrast to the category of the people of the previous verses. Then we have the exhortations:

1. *V20a.* You should not only *contend* for the faith (*verse 3*), you also need to be *building yourself up* on your “*most holy faith*”. That’s something you need to take care of yourself. You do that by being busy with God’s Word, in order to learn to know the truth of faith better. The truth of faith is the foundation that you lean on with your heart and soul. The sound teaching that is being taken in by your heart is necessary for your spiritual well-being. It is a matter of your heart.
2. *V20b.* Beside the necessity of the building up in the faith, there is also the necessity of the prayer “*in (and not ‘to!’) the Holy Spirit*”. This is not possible for those who do not have the Spirit. But it is also not always the way of praying of every believer. A believer may pray in a formal way, after a standard model, or by praying a prayer in which the ‘I’ is centered (*Jam 4:3*). There is no power in such prayers. A prayer “*in the Holy Spirit*” is a prayer *in the power of* the Holy Spirit, in which He together with the spirit of the believer asks God what matters to God’s work and is to the glory of the Lord Jesus.
3. *V21a.* To the building up of yourself on your most holy faith and the prayer in the Holy Spirit, you should also add keeping yourself “*in the love of God*”. Herein lies the command to keep yourself aware of God’s love. The love of God is the atmosphere wherein you find yourself. It is your responsibility to be aware of it. It is living in the conscious security that nothing can separate you from God (*Rom 8:39*).

It is like the shining of the sun. The sun always shines, but something can possibly come between you and the sun, which causes you not to be standing in the sun anymore and not to feel the warmth of it. When sin and unbelief are with you, they will cause you to shut yourself off from the beams of God’s love for you. His love is surely there, but you are not able to enjoy it at that moment. You have shut yourself off from it. Not only sins cause that effect. You can

also be focused on the difficulties in your life in such a way that you forget about God's love. The point is that you do not allow that something comes between you and God's love for you.

4. *V21b*. As the fourth and final exhortation with regard to yourself, Jude says that you should be looking for "*the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life*". This is about the second coming of Christ. His first coming was also an expression of God's mercy (*Lk 1:72,78*). Now that He in the last of times is about to come for the second time, your attention is drawn to that. When He comes the apostates will be no more able to do evil. He will then take you away from the circumstances of misery to be with Him and enjoy the eternal life with Him to its fullness.

V22. Now three exhortations follow with regard to others. If you take the four previous exhortations to heart you will be longing to help others who may have got caught up in the trap of the people who secretly have crept in or in one way or another have been influenced by them.

However, the versions of these verses are somewhat diverse. In case you have several versions at your disposal, you will have to compare them. In my explanation I use the version that seems most convincing to me.

5. The first category regards the doubters. They must be 'corrected' (which seems to be a better translation than 'have mercy on'), because they make their doubts turn into issues of discussions. You should help them to step out of the doubts and discussions by convincing them of the firm foundation of God's truth.
6. *V23a*. "*Others*" have already been more influenced by the people who crept in unnoticed. You see that they go the wrong way, the way to the fire. Think about the evolution theory, a poison that is being taken in by countless innocent youngsters, due to nice sounding so-called scientific

arguments. That also includes Bible critics. Not only is correction in its place here, but these 'others' are to be saved with power from these people. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is necessary to save them from their erring way (*Jam 5:16b-20*).

7. *V23b*. The third group has gone the furthest. In case you have a task towards them, you must do that *"with fear"*, which refers to yourself, that you may not be dragged by them. You need to watch out carefully not to be involved yourself with their uncleanness in one way or another, even not with that of its appearance (represented by *"the garment polluted by the flesh"*). In your efforts to help them you run the risk of getting into temptation by participating in their sinful way of living instead of keeping distance.

Every connection with the sinful life is to be taken away, even if it is about things that are not sinful in themselves. You may think for instance of things that another person has gained in a sinful way, through which he made his life pleasant. In this way I once received a device for my computer as a sign of gratitude for my help from a person who wanted to cleanse himself from sin. After a while it appeared that he had bought that device with borrowed money. He had piled up a huge debt at several instances in order to afford himself a luxury life style. He gave that device to me without ulterior motives, but it was a 'garment defiled by the flesh'. He did not have that feeling when he gave it to me. I gave that device back to him and said that he had to sell it himself in order to diminish his debt.

V24. When you become thoroughly aware of what Jude has said, a feeling of powerlessness may overwhelm you. How great is it that he concludes his letter with focusing your eyes on Him *"who is able to keep you from stumbling"*. He not only keeps you from stumbling on the way, but it is His aim that you will be *"in the presence of His glory blameless"* and that *"with great joy"*. That aim will be accomplished and the joy will in no way be disturbed.

V25. God keeps us from harm and makes us perfect, because He is *"God our Savior"*. He is that *"through Jesus Christ"*, just like He does everything through His Son. Jesus Christ is also *"our Lord"*. He has all power. If you consider that and become thoroughly aware of that, you will glorify Him for that. In this dangerous time there is yet always a reason to glorify God, or maybe just because of the particular circumstances. You will want to ascribe Him everything that Jude mentions here:

- *"glory"*, which is all excellence that is visible of Him,
- *"majesty"*, which is His dignity and splendor beyond everything,
- *"dominion"*, which is His omnipotence, all the means that He has, everything that is at His disposal to carry out His plans and
- *"authority"*, which is His personal right and inner capability to do that.

This all is being ascribed to Him *"before all time"* and also through the ages, both *"now"* and *"forever"* by all His own.

You and I heartily agree to that and say together with Jude *"amen"*, so it is and not otherwise.

Now read Jude :17-25 again.

Reflection: Which exhortations and encouragements do you find in this section?

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