

# Spurgeon Expositions and Sermons on 1 John

## SERMONS & EXPOSITION

### 1 JOHN

C H SPURGEON

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## 1 John 3:20, 21 The Lower Courts

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**“For if our heart condemns, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” — 1 John 3:20, 21.**

The fault of a very large number of persons is that they will not lay spiritual things to heart at all, but treat them in a very superficial manner; or if they exercise any judgment concerning them, it is of the most superficial kind. Now this is very foolish, because, to say the least of it, the soul is of some value; and if men lay to heart the loss of their bodily health or of their estate, much more ought they to lay to heart anything which concerns their soul. It is very wicked as well as very foolish, because, in refusing to lay spiritual matters to heart, we virtually tell the God who made us that he is of no account to us, that we are quite indifferent to his being, to his character, or to his commands, that we do not desire to be obedient to him, and that, if we have been disobedient to him, we do not trouble ourselves about that. It is also as dangerous as it is foolish and wicked to be unconcerned about spiritual matters, for God will not be trifled with; and, one of these days, those who would not lay eternal things to heart will find their souls full of anguish, and with remorse they will be visited for this lightness of theirs. Whereas, today, like those of old who were invited to the wedding of the king's son, they make light of it, and go their way to their farm or to their merchandise, there will come a day when they would give all their farms and their merchandise if they might have but another hour's respite, another invitation of mercy, and another opportunity to seek and find the Savior. I do pray that, if any here have been amongst those who do not lay to heart the things that concern their own immortal souls, they may not any longer be suffered to remain in the company of such vain and sinful persons, but may come out from that congregation of the foolish, and begin to lay to heart the things which make for their eternal peace.

Then, beloved friends, there is another class of persons, very much superior to those of whom I have spoken, who nevertheless make a mistake of another kind. They do lay the things of God to heart, and they are constantly weighing themselves in the balances of conscience; they look within again and again, they are not afraid of heart-searching; indeed they spend the most of their time in that stern occupation. Am I about to blame these friends? I must answer, “No and yes.” I will not, blame them for what they do, for they do the right thing; but I shall blame them for what they leave undone, namely this, they forget that the tribunal of conscience, though a very important one, is not the supreme court; and that, although it is well to try matters before the heart to see whether it condemns or acquits, yet there is another court, far higher than the court of the human heart; for “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” There are some good Christian people who are always distressed because they never take their cases into the supreme court, and, on the other hand, I fear that there are some ungodly professors who are always presumptuously at ease because they have been satisfied with the verdict of the lower court, which is very liable to err in its judgment, and have never presented their case before the great Judge who cannot by any means make a mistake.

I am going to speak of these two courts; first, of the lower court of the heart or conscience, and then of the higher court where he presides who is “greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” In speaking upon this subject, I shall mention four forms of verdict

which may be given in the court of the heart. The first is a correct verdict against ourselves; the second is an incorrect verdict against ourselves; (the first verse of our text applies to both of these;) the third is a correct verdict of acquittal; (that is in the second verse of our text;) and then, lastly, I will say something about an incorrect verdict of acquittal, which, peradventure, our heart may sometimes give.

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### **I. First, then, the apostle speaks of A Correct Verdict Against Ourselves: "If our heart condemn us."**

There are some persons whose hearts justly condemn them, and the voice of conscience, is in them the voice of God. The echo of the divine sentence, "Depart, ye cursed," is heard by them in the halls of conscience before the voice of God has spoken it, -strangely contrary to echoes among men, which always follow the voice. Conscience is saying, "Thou wilt be driven, O man, from the presence of God!" Now, in this case, the court of conscience sits under the King's arms, with the marks of divine authority displayed above its head; and conscience sitting thus as a judge, judges rightly when it judges by the Word of God. Righteous judgment must not be according to man's whim or fancy, but according to the supreme law of God, and the verdict of conscience is worth nothing unless it be so formed. The charge against the culprits is that they have broken God's law; and, in the case of many of them, that they have also rejected God's mercy. They have offended against the law and against the gospel too.

There stands a prisoner at the bar, and there sits conscience as the judge; and over its head I see tokens of God's authority permitting conscience to judge him! The first witness that is called against the prisoner is memory. I put to it certain questions. "Memory, what hast thou to say concerning the life of this man? Has he kept God's law?" And memory answers truthfully, "No." "Has he then violated it?" "Yes, thousands of times." "How long is it since he began to violate it?" "From a child." "Has he continued to do so?" "Yes, to this very hour." "Has he not repented of his sin, and craved forgiveness from God?" "No, he has pretended to repent, he has had twitches of conscience; he has been alarmed at times, but he has hardened his heart, and gone back to his sin, and done despite to the Spirit of God." "Memory, canst thou tell me how often the prisoner has broken God's law?" "I cannot. Count the stars of the sky, or the sand by the sea shore; then only canst thou know how often he has sinned." "Against which of the commands has he offended?" "Against them all." "Canst thou give us some instances?"

I will not ask memory to expose any of you before this congregation, but I will ask your own memories to charge each one of you with your own sins whatever they may have been, -that sin of licentiousness, that piece of trickery in trade, that angry thought, that hard word, that oppression of the innocent, that tempting of another to sin, that ruin of another in body and soul, that putting down of conscience on such-and-such a night when he struggled with thee, and would have had thee cease from sin, that wicked resolve not to be melted down under a certain specially earnest sermon, that desperate determination not to feel the force of divine love even when it came so near to thee as to graze thee. Who of all the unpardoned sinners in the world has not some special sins to remember, to blush over, and to weep over, ay, with tears of blood if that were possible? Ah, memory, if thou shouldst tell all that thou hast recorded, thy story would be too terrible for us to hear, and we should have to close the court, or bid some withdraw out of hearing, for thou wouldst have much to tell which would not be fit for their ears to hear!

Another witness is called, for it would not be right to condemn a man upon the evidence of only one witness, however excellent that witness might be. So I call the man's own knowledge into the witness-box, and examine it. "What dost thou know, man concerning thyself? Art thou at this moment a lover of God?" "No," saith he. "Art thou at this moment one who loves Christ? Art thou at this hour one who desires to be reconciled to thy Maker? Dost thou desire to glorify God? Dost thou desire to overcome all sin, and to live in perfect holiness?" "The answer is a negative in every case, and the judge hears this. It is not merely what the man has done, but what the man is; -not merely what he was yesterday, or in his youth, but what he is today. He is still an enemy to his God, and he hath no love to his Maker, but he is contented still to lead an unholy life; so in, the mouth of these two witnesses his guilt is established.

But there are witnesses for the defense, so let them be heard. These are usually two, -self-love and self-esteem. The man pleads that he is no worse than others; yet a thief would not be allowed to escape punishment if he pleaded, "I am no worse a thief than my brother-thieves." The man next says that he has done many good things, as if the keeping of one law would be any excuse for having broken another; this is as if the thief should plead before the judge that he was not a drunkard, or if he had committed burglary, that he had not been a garotter. Would this be accepted as an excuse? Then the man pleads that he has attended to a number of outward religious ceremonies, which is just as if a thief should say that he washed his hands every morning, and took care to shave himself at certain intervals. What would all that have to do with the offense laid to his charge? If those things were right things for him to do, he did well in doing them; but they could make no atonement for his offenses. Men will sometimes plead that, after all, it was more their misfortune than their fault that they fell into any sin at all. Yet man never considers such an excuse as that in reference to wrongs done to his fellow-creatures, but the law deals with the offenses as having been wilfully committed, and even so does God.

The court, after having heard these two lying witnesses, whose testimony is worth nothing, considers its verdict, and the heart

condemns the prisoner at the bar. Now what says the text? "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." So, if any man or woman here feels self-condemned, how much more must such an one be condemned by God! If you feel uneasy even now, what cause for disquietude must there be in prospect of the just judgment of God! If your blear-eyed conscience, which never yet half-opened its eyes, has condemned you, what guilt must God see in you! If conscience has decided against you, knowing only half-nay, perhaps not a millionth part of your criminality, how certainly will the unerring Judge of all the earth, who knoweth all things, decide against you! I would like to make those four words ring again and again in your ears, "God knoweth all things." Then he knows the sins that you have forgotten, or that you wish you could forget. Well, even if you have done so, they are fresh in his unfailing memory. Perhaps you cry, in the bitterness of your agony, "Cursed be the day wherein I committed them! Oh, for fountains of water to wash out the damning spots! But though I should redden the Atlantic, and with the crimson ocean try to remove the accursed spots of sin, they would still remain; and even though I could not see them, yet still that eye, which through the murky night looks down on all, and sees as through the brightest day, that eye still sees my sins."

"God knoweth all things;" that is, he knows all about your sins of omission, the good things that you have not done, the righteous acts which you have failed to perform. He knows what your motives have been; he knows how that apparently good action of yours was based upon sheer selfishness,-how your pretended religiousness was, after all, only varnished hypocrisy. O sirs, unless this blessed Book is all fiction, there are some of you who are great fools, for, while you are condemning yourselves, you are calmly sitting down in prospect of the eternal judgment as if you thought that God would acquit you! You have lost the case in the lower court, where the judge is partial, and would give a verdict in your favor if possible; how then will you dare to stand in the higher court, where the verdict must go against you if your case remains as it now is? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." God grant that these words may not be forgotten, but may they be words that shall arouse some here whom God intends to bless!

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## **II. Now I must pass on to the second point, An Incorrect Verdict Against Ourselves.**

Sometimes our heart condemns us, but, in doing so, it gives a wrong verdict, and then we have the satisfaction of being able to take the case into a higher court, for "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." This is giving another sense to the passage, and almost all the great expositors say that there are two senses here,-the legal sense and the evangelical sense. This evangelical sense was that which Luther was so bold in proclaiming. I will give you the meaning of the text in this way. The question before our heart is, are we Christians or not? Have we believed in Christ or not? Conscience takes knowledge of all our imperfections, failings, shortcomings, and conscience says, "No, the man is not a Christian, he is guilty of such-and-such sins." And many a dear child of God, ay, and some of the best of God's children, have often had a verdict in the court of their own conscience which has been adverse to their hopes, the reason being that their conscience has been cognizant of only one side of the case, or they have forgotten some great and important truth, which ought to have been mentioned before the court, and then its verdict would have been different.

I may have here many children of God who are condemned by their own conscience, and if I only looked within my own heart, it would condemn me. If I had to bring the evidences of my salvation from my prayers, my preaching, or my daily actions, my heart would condemn me. New evidence is sometimes brought into court which completely changes the aspect of the case. I daresay you have sometimes been a juryman, and you would not like to tell your brother juryman how many times you have changed your mind while you have heard the evidence; but if you have listened to it attentively, I expect you have had half a dozen different opinions during the trial. You have heard the whole case against the prisoner, and you have said to yourself, "He's certainly guilty;" and you have thought, "Ah, Mr. Foreman, you shall have my verdict against him!" Then some evidence is brought which throws more light upon the case, and then something else is said in favor of the prisoner, and you have said, "Ah, I was too much in a hurry," and before the whole case was finished, you have been quite satisfied that the man was innocent. It is just so with our heart, it condemns a man when it has only heard half the evidence; but, happily, "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

Here is the case. This man, a believer in Jesus-Christ, has been guilty of all these sins; he admits that he has. They are very many, and very black so it is a clear case that he should be condemned. No, it is not; for there is a circumstance that has not been mentioned yet. It is true that the man was deeply in debt to the law of God, but his debt has been paid for him by his glorious Surety, and there is a receipt for it signed by God himself; does not that alter the case? The debt is proved, it is true; but, as soon as the debt is proved, the receipt is produced to show that the debt has been discharged. The Christian comes into court, and says, "I admit my guilt, but I plead that Christ suffered in my stead. I confess my sin, but I also claim that it was laid upon Christ, and though my heart condemns me, God is greater than my heart, and he does not condemn me, for he looks upon his dear Son, and sees me in him, "accepted in the Beloved."

A man is tried for a certain crime, but his counsel assures the court the man who committed that crime is dead, and that the prisoner at the bar is not that man at all. A reliable witness is produced who testifies that he knew the other man well, and that he saw him

dead and buried; and another trustworthy person declares that the prisoner at the bar is a different man altogether. So it is with us to-day; every true believer in Christ, can say, "I was verily guilty, but I died with Christ, and was buried with him and now I am a new creature in Christ Jesus; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. I am no longer what I once was, for I have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The case against the prisoner stands as it did before, and the heart was right in condemning him; but now there is more light thrown on the subject, and he can confidently ask, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth: It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Through the death and resurrection of Christ, and our union to him, so that they are counted as our death and resurrection, we have passed into a state of justification; and through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, the sin which was laid at our door has ceased to be, and we are accounted righteous through the righteousness of Christ. So that, "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

Have you ever had a battle (I know you have, if you are a true child of God,) with your own evidences? It is usually very poor work to turn over your own evidences. I believe that lawyers enjoy poring over musty old deeds, because there are generally six-and-eight-pences or guineas to come to them as the result; but I cannot say that I am much interested in "rights, easements, hereditaments," and so on, and the experience of reading an old deed is very much like the experience of turning over your own evidences. You say, "I am a man of prayer." But what kind of; prayer was it? Why, your thoughts were wandering all the time you were praying. "But," say you, "I do love God." "Ah!" cries the devil, "and a precious kind of love it is! It needs a microscope to see it if there is any love, them at all." "Ah! but I do long after holiness." "You have nobody to bear witness to that but yourself," says the devil, "for as soon as a sin looks attractive to you, though you do not actually go to it, you know that your heart goes after it." "But my faith is fixed on Christ." "Ah! but where does your unbelief go? You would like to trust to yourself after all if you dared to do so." Satan can generally beat us in argument, and when our own conscience also condemns us, the best thing is to go straight away to the Court of King's Bench, and say, "The devil is too strong for us; so we will go where we can leave our case in the hands of our great Advocate, who is more than a match for Satan."

Then, beloved, God can often see in his people the good which they cannot see in themselves, and I believe he like he likes best those people who think least of themselves. When you look into the glass, do you see a very lovely face? Ah, then you have never really seen yourself. But if you look into the glass, and see yourself defiled and filthy, and then see the change that Christ works in you, you are one of those whom God loves, because he loves those who are contrite in spirit and broken in heart, and who think meanly of themselves.

"Well," says one, "I never had a doubt about my state; I have always felt sure that I was all right." Then, my friend, if you never had a doubt for yourself, allow me to doubt for you. Ah, beloved! it is not high thoughts that prove us to be Christians; it is lying humbly in the dust before the mercy-seat that is one of the sure signs that we are the children of God. So although your heart condemns you, as my own heart and conscience have condemned me a thousand times, I trust that you can yet say with me, —

**" I do believe, I will believe**

**That Jesus died for me;**

**That on the cross he shed his blood**

**From sin to set me free."**

Savior, I will trust thee, and I do trust thee. Lost and ruined, and guilty, and all but damned, I will still trust thee; and so thou canst not cast me away, for thou hast promised, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

So, you see, there is a blessedly comforting meaning in these words of the apostle John as well as a meaning that should arouse us all to earnest concern about our real standing in the sight of God.

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**III. Now, thirdly, we have A Correct Verdict Of Acquittal: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."**

When is it that our heart does not condemn us? Of course, it always does condemn us in some things. There may be people in the world who are perfect. I should like to have the pleasure of their acquaintance, yet I do not know whether they would like to have the pleasure of mine, for I am afraid that my imperfections and their perfections would make a quarrel before long, and I do not know whether they would not be the people to quarrel first. Superior articles generally crack the soonest; and whenever a brother has had a very high polish on him, and much varnish of the very first quality, I have generally proved him to be a hypocrite before long. Still, it is not my business to judge him, to his own Master let him stand or fall. If he is perfect, I say again that I should like to know him,

for I know that I am not perfect.

But our heart does not condemn us about some things. For instance, we ask, "Are we really sincere in our profession of religion?" and our conscience answers, "Yes; we do not make a profession of religion in order to gain by it, nor because it makes us respectable, nor because it brings us comfort and ease; God knows that we do it because we cannot help doing it. We love Christ, and we must take sides with him; and, unless we are utterly deceived, we are sincere in saying that we are followers of Christ." I am putting these words into the mouths of those of you who really feel that you ought to utter them, and I trust that each one of you will join me in saying, "I am a poor lost sinner, but I do trust in Jesus Christ and him crucified, and I do hang upon him as the only Savior; and if that be the faith that saves the soul, I certainly have exercised it. I have no reliance on any ceremony, or any doctrine, or anything that I can do, or feel, or say, or be; nothing but the crucified, risen, and glorified Christ is my confidence." Beloved, that is one thing in which our heart does not condemn us.

And then, it is the same when we can add, "With all our imperfections, we feel that we do love God's people, and we do love our fellow-men; we desire to relieve their distresses as far as we can, and as much as lieth in us, we desire to promote the happiness and comfort of others." If a man cannot say this, he cannot claim to be a Christian, because any man who lives for himself is no more a Christian than the devil is. The first object of the Christian is to glorify God, and the next object is to make other people happy. Those who never study other people in the household, but are selfish, and let their narrow soul be confined within their own ribs, have nothing about them in common with a real Christian. If a man truthfully says, "I love others, and I especially love the saints of God," then he may say that his conscience does not condemn him. I am not saying this on my own authority. Let me turn your attention to a few of the verses preceding our text, reading from the fourteenth verse: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death ... Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love, of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." You see, this is the very evidence that God gives, that by our love to others our hearts will be assured before him, and we shall have confidence concerning our own relationship towards God.

There is one other thing about which our hearts do not condemn us; we do feel that we love holiness, and love righteousness and though we do not always act as we should, and have to mourn over our sins, yet we hate them and loathe ourselves for going into sin. We would, if we could, have perfect tempers. We would, if we could, act in perfect righteousness towards man, and in perfect holiness towards God.

It is the duty of a Christian to be strictly just in all his business transactions, and not to ask, "What is the custom of the trade?" The customs of many trades are dishonest, and the usual modes of carrying them on are little better than systematic roguery. I have heard of men who mark a hundred as a hundred and twenty, and who mark goods as of certain lengths when they know they are not of such lengths; and they say, "It is the custom of the trade." Well, if it be the custom of your trade, to lie, remember that it is God's custom to send all liars to hell. A Christian man has no right to lie even if all the world should concur in the lies; he should say, "No, I serve the God of truth; and, come what may, no falsehood shall defile my tongue for Christ has cleansed it, and made it his own."

Our text says, "If our heart condemn us not," and we thus know that we are God's children, "then have we confidence toward God." I wish I had an hour in which to preach upon this part of the text, though I daresay you do not; but these words are full of comfort, "then have we confidence toward God." The man who has a clear conscience, like a little bird, to sing in his heart, has confidence toward God in this way. He knows that he is the Lord's, and that God loves him. He knows that God will not do him any hurt, and knows that God is blessing him, and will continue to bless him. He knows that God is his Father and his Friend, and he therefore goes to God in great confidence about his troubles, and tells them all to him. He has much confidence in prayer, and he may talk to God in prayer in a way which other people may think too familiar, yet it will not be so. His heart is right with God, and therefore he has confidence toward God. He does not doubt God's faithfulness, or God's truth, or God's power, or God's veracity. He simply confides in God, and lets things go as they will, for he knows that God is ruling and over-ruling all, and he walks through the world with a childlike, restful confidence, knowing that God will keep him and preserve him even to the end. And when he has to die, he will die in confidence, and when he rises from the grave, he will rise in confidence; and when the world is all ablaze, he will behold the last great conflagration without alarm; and when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ, he will stand there without a tremor. He has confidence toward God, for he has peace within him.

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#### **IV. Now I have very briefly to speak concerning An Incorrect Verdict Of Acquittal.**

There are some persons whose hearts do not condemn them for this reason, that their hearts are hopelessly stolid. God save you, my dear hearers, from a heart which is so full of pride that it is, as David says, "as fat as grease," and from a heart that is harder than

adamant, and from a heart that knows it is guilty, but will not condemn itself, but whispers, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. There are tens of thousands of men, walking the streets of London, who are living habitually in the worst of sin, yet their hearts are so petrified, and rendered so perverse from everything like right judgment, that they rarely if ever appear to condemn them.

But I take leave to tell them that what little heart they have left does condemn them, for this reason, that, when a man's heart is right, and does not condemn him, he has confidence toward God. Ask these men whether they have any confidence toward God. "God!" say they, "do not let us even hear his name; how do you know that there is any God?" Such men never feel so easy in mind, and never are in such an argumentative mood as when some precious philosopher attempts to prove that there is no God; that is the very thing for them. Would not the devil's children ring all the bells for many a day if they could but prove that there was no God. What a jubilation there would be amongst the rogues, thieves, vagabonds, and sceptics if they could once feel sure that there was no God! It would be the worst thing that could possibly happen to us who love him, but to them it would be the best thing that could happen according to their notions. And why? Because there is something within their heart that tells them, after all, that they are not right; and as they do not want to get right, they try to persuade themselves that there is no God. That is their way of getting a little sleep for their conscience.

But they are not really as quiet as they think they are. Supposing I were to ask such a man, who was so quiet and at ease, whether he would mind sitting down for half-an-hour when he got home, and looking into futurity, and seeing whether there is a judgment, a heaven, and a hell, what would be the result? "Not I," says he, "I am not going to bother myself about such things as those." It is said that you ought not to talk about the gallows if you know that there is anybody present who had a relative who was hanged; and these men, in like manner, do not like us to talk about judgment, heaven, and hell. O sirs, you are like the silly ostrich that buries its head in the sand, and hopes that nobody will see it. Why, if there be no such things, it will have done you good to have thought about them, and to have confirmed yourself in the notions of which you boast so much.

I also ask you to do another thing. You say that your heart does not condemn you, but will you for a little while contemplate death? We will let judgment alone for a minute. I suppose you believe that you will die; you have not yet found out a patent for the preservation of highly-cultured intellects from the vulgar hands of the sexton; you do not expect that education will keep you out of the tomb; so will you think about death? "No," says the man, "I shall do nothing of the sort; it would give me the blues for a week." Ah, I see, I see! Your conscience has not acquitted you, after all; for, if it had, you would not be so unwilling to think about death. I do not object to think of death, and there is no believer in Christ here who objects to thoughts of death, but rather we-pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." There must be something radically wrong about that supposed ease and peace of mind which will not bear contemplations of death and judgment. The fact is, you are condemned by your own heart; for, if you were not, you would have confidence toward God. And let me assure you that those who have once experienced confidence toward God greatly rejoice in it. It is the joy of life, and it will light up even the dark valley of death. Confidence in God is, in fact, the beginning of heaven, and methinks it is a part of the very fruition of heaven itself.

God bless you, dear friends! May we all be led to faith in Jesus Christ! Remember that there is salvation in him. Whoever trusts Jesus Christ is saved. Whoever relies upon his finished work shall never come into condemnation; and even though his heart may sometimes accuse him, Christ will clear him from all guilt through his own most precious blood. May this be; the happy portion of each one of you here! May each one be able to say,-

**"In Christ I have believed,**

**And through the spotless Lamb**

**Grace and salvation have received,**

**In him complete I am."**

In closing my sermon, I ask every individual here that old and personal question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Somebody says, "Yes, I do believe, in him, glory be to his holy name." I hope there are many in this place who can truly say, "With all our hearts we do believe in Jesus Christ our Savior. We have a thousand infirmities, but we do trust in him." Just a notch lower, there is one who says, "I do believe in Jesus, but not as fully as I would like to." Ah, well, dear brother, faith grows if it is true faith. That is a good prayer, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." I expect you will get higher by-and-by, and be able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Another friend says, "I hope and trust that I do believe in Jesus." Brother, get out of that stage, I implore you. I never like to "hope and trust" in that fashion. When I get to bed at night, and say to myself, "Did I lock the door?" I am not content to lie there, and say, "I hope and trust that I did." There may be a thief in the garden, so it will not be safe for me to "hope and trust" that all doors and windows are properly fastened. We like to be sure about these less important matters; how much more ought we to be sure about the salvation of our souls! If a man owes you a hundred pounds, and someone says to you, "Is he solvent?" it is not very satisfactory if you can only say, "I hope he is." You will feel much easier in your mind when you know that he is solvent; and it is a great deal

better to know that you are saved than to go on hoping and hoping, or saying, "I hope and trust it is all right." You are either saved or you are not saved; do get to know which is true. Give no rest to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you do really know that you are trusting in Jesus, and that therefore you are saved.

Somebody a little lower down says, "I do not know whether I do believe in Jesus or not." Well, if you do not yourself know, nobody else, can tell you; and I should recommend you to begin trusting Christ now. I always find that the shortest way to deal with doubt and fear is to say, "Well, if I am not a believer in Jesus Christ, I will believe in him now." So I urge you, my friend, to go to him, and say,-

**"Just as I am-without one plea  
But that thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come."**

Begin to-night, dear friend. If you fancied you did begin once before, begin again now; and if you never did begin before, begin now.

"Well," says another, "I am trying to believe in Jesus." That is another grade, and it is all wrong, for a man cannot truly say that he is trying to believe in Jesus. What are you doing to help you to believe in him? Are you hearing the gospel earnestly? Are you searching the Scriptures for evidence concerning Christ? Or are you just doing nothing but saying "I am trying to believe?" Suppose I read an article in the newspaper, and then say, "I am trying to believe it." Well, if I am searching for evidence and questioning others as to whether it is true or not, I speak correctly; but if I merely put the paper away, and sit down, and say, "I will try to believe it," that is absurd. The fact is, you do not believe in Jesus, or you would not say, "I am trying to believe in him."

"Well," says one, "I do not yet believe in Jesus, but I wish I did." I like to hear you say those last words, for when a man wishes to believe what is certainly true, methinks he will soon believe it. There is many a man who has wished to believe a lie till he has believed it, and I think that a man who wishes to believe the truth has the easier task of the two. May the ever-blessed Spirit lead you into a solemn conviction of the truth as it is in Jesus!

If there is one here who says, "I do not believe in Jesus, and I do not want to believe in him," may God have mercy upon that poor sinner, and save him to-night, and God shall have the glory both now and for ever. Amen.

## 1 John 4:19

### Love's Great Reason

NO. 3398

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

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**"We love him because he first loved us." — 1 John 4:19.**

This is the point where all genuine Christians meet. They can all say, without exception, "We love him." They do not agree in doctrine; it is a pity, but what they did; but I suppose that, so long as we are in this body, we shall none of us see all the truths at once, and each man, seeing only portion of the truth is most likely to think that what he does not see is not true, whereas it may be just as important as that which he is able to perceive. Well, well, amidst a thousand controversies between Calvinism and Arminianism, and all the forms that various systems have taken with regard to this, and that, and the other, still, all the elect of God, being quickened by divine grace, unite in this one declaration, "Whatever we do not believe, we do love him." There are great diversities of experience, as well as of doctrine. Some are down in the gloom, and some never seem to leave the cellars of the Lord's house: they have deep spiritual exercises: they doubt, they fear, they tremble, and are afraid. Others climb up to the very roof of the Palace Beautiful, and look abroad upon the fair scene around. Their feet are used to dancing with spiritual delight, and their hearts sing sweetly before the Lord. Theirs is an experience of communion rather than of corruption. They have been with Jesus, and their faces are made to shine with his company. Perhaps if I told my experience, it might differ from yours from an experimental point of view: in that we might stand wide as the poles asunder; but if we are in Christ, we can each of us say with equal truth and intensity, "We love him." There we join hands. Whatever we have not felt, and tasted, and known, we do love him.

And you will notice, too, in this short expression that there is a force, a power, in it, principally derived from the fact of the personality of this love. "We love him." You know, to love an "it" is hard work. It seems contrary to the nature and all the instincts of love. Love ever seeks a living person to grasp. But when it is put "we love him," it reads so naturally that we feel that we can love, through the force of the divine nature within us, with all the vitality and intensity of our godliness.

We can love him — that blessed Son of God, that condescending One, that sacrificing, dying Lamb: that ascended, reigning, coming Savior, towards whom our hearts are drawn out. "We love him." Depend upon it we must have more preaching about the person of Christ, and our hearts must assume more and more a trustfulness and affection towards him. A merely doctrinal religion is pretty sure to degenerate into, bigotry; an experimental religion will sooner or later sink into gloom. Understand what I mean. I am not speaking either against doctrine or experience. On the contrary, I would say all I could in favor of both, and they do enter into all men's lives who live near to Christ, but, still make either the one or the other the great master-thought, brood over either of them, contend for them, live for them, throw your whole force into them, and you may degenerate. But when you live as unto him, when he is the truth that you believe in, when he is the way that you tread, when he is the life that you experience, and when the doctrine, and practice, and experience all meet in him as lines in a center, then you shall not be degraded, you shall not degenerate, but you shall rise, you shall go from glory to glory, being changed by the presence of the Lord. "We love him," then.

But I must make one observation before I plunge into the text, namely, that, in order to love this blessed person, being a person, it is clear to everyone who thinks, that there must, first of all, have been some acquaintance with him, and then some deep conviction concerning his excellency. We cannot love whom we do not know or esteem. If we know nothing about Christ, have no understanding of him, have not in any degree occupied our minds with him, we may talk about love to him, but it will be mere talk. And after we have known Christ, by the reading or hearing of the Word, blessed to us by his Holy Spirit, it will be needful for us to be brought into an admiring confidence in him, believing that he is the altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand, worthy of all our reliance, worthy of all our adoration and service. Then it is, when knowledge has produced faith, that faith gives birth to love.

I make this remark because I have sometimes noticed that, in addressing Sunday-school children, it is not uncommon to tell them that the way to be saved is to love Jesus, which is not true. The way to be saved for man, woman, or child is to trust Jesus for the pardon of sin, and then, trusting Jesus love comes as a fruit Love is by no means the root. Faith alone occupies that place. And I think I have heard young persons, too, talking always about the question, "Do I love the Lord or no?" — a very proper question, but it is not the first, but the second. The question that should always come first is, "Do I trust the Lord or no? Do I rest entirely in what he has done for me? Am I depending upon him for eternal life and salvation?" If that first question be answered, the second will not long remain a matter of doubt; but if you begin with the second, and neglect the first, you may involve yourselves in very serious consequences. The great gospel precept is not "Love Christ" but "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" — not that love is less than faith, but that love, though, perhaps, first in point of excellence in some respects, comes second in point of order, and that faith is first to be looked to in the soul, and then love will inevitably and necessarily follow.

But now to come to the text. I shall treat the first sentence as the great general confession of the whole church — "We love him"; and the second sentence as the most glorious reason for that love — "because he first loved us." I am not going to preach this evening, but only to stir you up about these points.

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## **I. The Great General Confession, "We Love Him."**

Now, if you are a child of God, you will say, or if you do not say it, it will be true, "We love him." As sure as ever you have passed from darkness to light, whether you are an Episcopalian, or a Presbyterian, or a Baptist, or whatever you may be, you will agree with this utterance of the one mouth of the one Church. We all, without exception, who have believed in him, love him.

But how do we love him? We love him, first, not at all as we ought to love him. We confess that much with shame — and not at all as we wish to love him. Our conception of what is due to Christ is, no doubt, very short of what is due to him, but we fall short even of our own conception. I am afraid that many of us are like the children at school, who have a good, fair copy set them at the top of the page, and the next line is written to imitate the copy, and the next imitates the imitation of the copy, and as it gets to the bottom of the page — alas! poor writing how unlike it is to the perfect copy at the top! So what is due to Christ stands at the top: what I believe about Christ in my best moments stands next: what I actually give to Christ comes next to that: and then far down the page how badly do I write, and how far do I fall short of what my love knows I ought to give to him!

**"Yes, I love thee and adore,**

**Oh! for grace to love thee more!"**

Now, remember, we never make ourselves love Christ more by flogging ourselves for not loving him more. We come to love those better whom we love by knowing them better, not by talking to ourselves about the duty of loving them, for love and duty, some how



or other, do not work well together. I mean that to talk of love being squeezed and pressed out by duty is not at all congruous. Love is like the generous first drops of the honeycomb — the virgin honey which drips spontaneously, because the comb is full to bursting. Such is true, genuine love. If you want to love Christ more, think more of him, think more of what you have received from him. Study his character more in the Word; draw oftener near to him in prayer; live more in holy fellowship with him. These are the faggots that shall make that oven blaze. This is the secret fuel that shall make our soul on fire with love to Jesus. We do not love him as we ought, nor as we wish.

But for all that, in the next place, we do really love him. The devil tells us we do not, but when it comes to close quarters we can turn to one who knows better than the devil, and we can say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." What a mercy it is that Jesus Christ does not believe our actions, for they very often say, "Jesus, we do not love thee." But he reads our hearts, and our hearts still beat with this, "Oh! my God! in my very soul I do love Christ, and if it were possible I would never sin against him: oh! wretched man that I am, that I should live so contrary to my true life, and that the thing that I would I do not, and what I would not that I do, for I find this law in my members, bringing me into captivity. For I have tasted of freedom, and am indeed, free, and will not be the servant of any, but will be the espoused one, the free espoused one of Christ Jesus my Lord." Yes, we do really love him.

And we also, if we be saints at all, love him practically. We delight and that is the true standard and gauge of the man — in that in which he delights. We delight in his service, in his company, in his friends. There is nothing — I feel sure some of us can say this without egotism — there is nothing that makes our soul feel so full of bliss as when we have opportunities of glorifying the name of Jesus Christ, and if we had the offer of all the kingdoms of the world, and but a grain of glory put into our hand that we might give to Christ — we would sooner have it than all the wealth of the Indies, and all the royalties of all the empires. To glorify Christ is a lasting treasure which shall abide with us when the world is on a-blaze. To teach one little child the name of Jesus, to bring the tear into its little eye about the dying Lord, is better and sweeter work to us than statesmanship itself could be if it were dissociated from him.

"Is there a lamb amongst thy flock I would disdain to feed? Is there a foe before whose face I'd fear thy cause to plead?"

Some of you are very busy preaching for my Lord, and I know that when you are preaching your main desire is that he may be extolled in your hearers' hearts. Do you not pine and sigh after this? Would you not give up all the graces of oratory, and talk in the most vulgar style, if need be, if you could win a soul for him thereby? I know you would, my brethren, for this is all the true minister's desire. And you, too, who have been standing in the streets today, preaching at the corners, I hope — nay, I feel it must be so with you if you are his at all — that you spoke out of love to his dear name, and when you would have preferred to have been silent, it was love that unloosened that tongue of yours. Do you not wish you could speak better? Do you not wish you could command attention better? And it is all for him, for his dear sake that you might paint him better before the eyes of men. And you, dear teachers, in the classes, you who have been engaged in the Sunday School, if you are right at all, and I trust you are, you have been teaching because you wanted to make him famous, and to let him see of the travail of his soul. And you who cannot come to the school, but have been praying for your children, and talking with them, you who have been dropping your pence into the box, and have each been trying to do your share of something for the Master — well, if his life be in your hearts, and his blood be sprinkled on you, you can say that you desire to do all this as a practical evidence that you so love him. All the works that you have done to-day, done in his Spirit, have been a repetition of this verse, "We love him."

Now, will you do the same in your ordinary lives, for in this I fear we sometimes fail? As a servant, live as one who loves Jesus. As a master, as a workman, as a merchant, as a man of retirement and property, still let this be the guide of your steps, the order of your life, the model by which you shape your conversation, "We love him." Let every breath prove it; let every heaving of the lungs, every motion of the tongue and of the hand prove the great and blessed reality of the fact that we love him.

Brethren and sisters, we can go a step further; I trust we love Jesus Christ, not only really and practically, but we love him supremely. That point has often vexed good hearts. They have said, "I cannot say that I love Jesus Christ better than father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or child." No; you cannot say it, and there are a great many things we cannot say, which it were better not for us to say, which would be immodest for us to say, but yet they may be true for all that. They who are beautiful talk not of their beauty, and those who love most are usually the most diffident about their love. Now, you cannot contrast loves the one to another, as you can contrast five to eight, and say which may be the greater. It is not an arithmetical problem, but I will put it to the proof with you in this way — if you had to lose that dear husband, or else lose Jesus Christ, which would you do? Why, it does not take two minutes to consider. You would not put them in the scale together for a single second. He stands, out of sight, above all husbands and dearest wives. We cannot consider him in such a relation as that. Or, put it thus: if you had to give up your hope of heaven and your interest in Christ tonight, or to lose all that you have — which would you do? Why, I think you would not need to go into that little chamber to calculate. "No," say you, "all that I have, why it is so little; it is a thing of care to me, and if it were not, if I had more, as I should be very glad to have that I might give up more, I would put it all away and say, 'Lord, I have left all that I might follow thee; but in leaving it, I did but gain a greater consciousness of thy love to me, and a far greater, and deeper enjoyment of that love.'"

Sometimes, however, some of you young people get an opportunity of showing which you love best — whether you do love Jesus

better than all things else, or not. In the case of marriage, that test often comes. And ah! how lamentable is the fact that many a young sister, and many a brother, too, will break through Christ's law, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." I know this is a perplexing and solemn point, mark you. You do, in fact, give Christ up when you take that ungodly man, and you, young man, when you seek after that Christless woman; you deny your Lord and Master; as far as you can do it, you deny him, and give him up for the sake of earthly pleasures. For such an act as that, your conscience may well prick you, and if you be, indeed the Lord's servant, the rod will follow you, and in your household the Lord's hand will go out against you as long as you live. You there came to the test, and could not stand it. But I hope there are many, many here who could say, "Yes, with everything that beauty could present to attract my heart, and all that wealth could lay at my feet to win my regard, with all that honor could put before me to dazzle my desires, I feel that I must obey my Lord and Master; I must be a chaste virgin unto him, and give myself to Christ, and to him alone." We love Christ, brethren — I trust we do supremely.

"We love him," also, always. The love of a believer to Christ is not a thing of Sundays, nor of public meetings and prayer meetings. "We love him" — it is the utterance of the man sitting at the writing-desk penning a letter, or standing in the market selling his corn, or on the exchange, dealing in his shares and stocks. "We love him." Our love is not a spasm: it is not a mere emotion, a thing of excitement. It does not, like the Salamander, live in the fire, but then die when the fire dies out. "We love him," soberly, steadily, constantly, persistently, after a real, and serious, and business-like spirit. "We love him" — it is intertwined with our daily life; it is part of our inmost being; it flows in the blood, it breathes in the lungs, it is everywhere about us, and we could as soon cease to, exist as to cease to be lovers of Christ. I mean, of course, if we be indeed, the saved sons of God. We love him, then, constantly.

And yet another thing, dearly beloved; we love him increasingly. We do not always think so, but it is true, if we are right with God. We love him more than ever. When we are first converted we think we shall love Jesus Christ a great deal more than we really prove to do, and much of that love afterwards departs, but it is only the superficial and half-fictitious love that vanishes.

See! Mary is lighting the fire: and as the straw or paper takes light at the bottom, what a great blaze there is! No sooner is the match put to it than the flames rush up the chimney. But come again in half an hour; why, there is not half the blaze, nor any cracking, nor noise! But is there less heat? Why, see, the coals have caught, and the whole grate has become one glowing mass of fire. There is not half the blaze and the crackling, but there is more real, solid heat. And so is it with the growing believer. At the first there is much of excitement, much of novelty, but afterwards there is the steady, calm warmth of a glowing soul. I can only say, brethren, that if we do not love Christ growingly we ought to do so. He is one that grows upon believers. The more they know him, the better they must love him. The longer is their experience of his faithfulness, and his fullness, and freeness, and goodness, and greatness, the deeper, and firmer, and broader, and higher ought to be their love of him, and I trust that it is so.

And another thing — we love him, and we are not ashamed to love him, and we are not ashamed to confess it, and we do not blush to bear the shame which may come to us after the avowal. Ah! perhaps I am addressing some here — I do not know where they are — who love my Lord, but they have never said so. Oh! thou that art on the rock, in the secret places of the stair, come forth, and let him hear thy voice, for that voice is sweet to him, and thy face is comely in his eye. Oh! be not ashamed to confess that thou lovest him. There is nothing in it of which to be ashamed. It might make an angel proud to be permitted to love Christ, and to declare his love. Ashamed of saying that I love him? No! let the earth hear it, and let it rage; let hell hear it, and let it boil over with fury: yet is he such an one that as I cry, "I love him," I feel it to be the grandest, greatest statement that grace can enable us to make. Yes: never in any circumstances make this a thing to be shy about, but avow it in your actions, and declare it by your public profession, "We love him."

Brethren, we bless God that the day is coming when we shall love him best of all. This tenement of our body is falling away by degrees: these fetters of the flesh are rusting off: we shall soon be free, and when the emancipated spirit shall see him without a veil to hide him, then shall our love to him be perfected. Or if he comes ere our death arrives, we shall see him as he is, and shall be like him, and then, too, shall our love rise to its transcendent maturity. It is a mercy that, while other loves die like lilies broken at the stalk, or fall like rosebuds when they burst and are full-blown, our love to Christ shall go on for ever and for ever increasing, and when heaven and earth shall pass away, immortal love, eternal love, shall still abide. As long as God exists, the love of God shall be shed abroad in us, and our hearts shall continually love him in return.

I might pause here to say — if it be true that you love him, dear brethren and sisters — love his people better, love his poor better, love his cause better, love his truth better, love poor blood-bought sinners better, love the assemblies of his saints better, love his Word better, keep his commandments better; draw nearer to him, aim to be more like him. May these practical truths, though unspoken by me, yet be lived out in your conversation. But now for the second head. We can only afford a few minutes upon it, but it is a subject which might well occupy eternity in our meditation: —

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## II. The Glorious Reason For Our Love.

"We love him — because he first loved us." It is personal again, you see, personal again. "We" — "him" — two persons — and here is the reason for it — "because he first loved us" — persons again. We do not love Christ because the minister preached, or we received his doctrines, or because we can understand that such-and-such things are in our Lord's teachings, but the reason for the love springs from himself, as it goes out after himself. It is because of something that he did, and something that he said, prior to anything that he did. "We love him, because he first loved us." Love is the cause of love. He loves — we love. We love second and after him, because he loves first and before us. He first. Now, that is an experimental truth. We know that he loved us before we loved him. Just look back on your life before conversion. He loved you then. What made you love him at all? It was because you were told that he loved you, and you believed it. Law and terrors never made you love him: they hardened you. It was a sense of blood-bought pardon that dissolved you and you saw the love of Christ in that pardon, and so, you could not help loving him in return. This is no novelty: this is no mere theory: it is a great truth. I pray you turn it over. Jesus loved you when you lived carelessly, when you neglected his Word, when the knee was unbent in prayer. Ah! he loved some of you when you were in the dancing saloon, when you were in the playhouse, ay, even when you were in the brothel. He loved you when you stood at hell's gate, and drank damnation at every draught. He loved you when you could not have been worse or further from him than you were. Marvellous, O Christ, is thy strange love! What love is this that shone on us when we were the serfs and slaves of Satan, the scullions in the kitchen of iniquity; when nothing was too hard for some of us to do if we might but sin, and yet he loved us! And others there were of us who were as bad as this — proud, hypocritical, rotten-hearted professors, who were boasting of our own self-righteousness, as proud as Lucifer, when there was not even a good thing in us, and yet we were loved with his great love, wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in trespass and in sins, blessed be his name!

Now, that is a matter of experience, and it is also a matter of our firm belief and joyous confidence that Jesus loved us before that — in that tremendous day, the center of the two eternities, the end of one dispensation, and the beginning of the next — that day in which the sun was darkened, and yet for the first time began to shine: that day in which earth did shake, and heaven was established: that day in which the dead arose, and the thoughts of men were discovered: in that day, when he, the appointed Substitute, went up to Calvary with all the sins of all his people upon him, piled like a tremendous world; when, like another Atlas, he bore that overwhelming load upon his shoulders, and afterwards heaved the whole infinite weight into forgetfulness. In that day he gave the supreme proof of his love to us. Look at those eyes red with weeping: see how he loves! Look to those cheeks defiled with the filthy spittle, and bruised where the fists of the scoffers smote him! See how he loved! Look to that dear head still scarred with the jagged wounds of the thorn-crown: look to that matchless mouth, and that tongue so parched: look to the whole face so marred as to be sorrow's dwelling-place: look to the whole body so utterly agonised, and tortured, and languishing: look to the tender, gracious hands — those crimson fountains tell the tale: look to the feet — those scarlet rivulets declare how deep is his love. Ay, look to his side, set abroach by the soldier's spear — that precious stream of blood and water declares with double and indisputable force that Jesus loves, and we were not born then; we were not here he loved us first.

But this grand old Book bids us go farther back than that day. He loved us when, in the garden, our first parents spoiled us all, and a promise was given that he should come to bruise the serpent's head. Ay, when yonder mountains were infants, when the grey old world and its ruins that speak of ages were as yet but newly formed, ay, and before that — ere the sun's great flame was lit by the divine torch, ere stars began to whirl in their all but boundless revolutions; when time was not, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days, and he dwelt alone, the infinite Jehovah — even then Jesus loved his people. His prescient eye had seen them; his sovereign choice had separated them; his distinguishing grace had discriminated them, and his eternal purpose had decreed them to be his for ever and ever. He loved us first.

Well, if this is not a good reason for loving him, where could such reason be found? He first loved us. Oh! cold hearts! Oh! slabs of marble! Oh! blocks of granite! Oh! icebergs! if we melt not now, when will we melt? He loved us first! That glorious thought like fire rushes through and through, and through our very deepest nature, and refines it, and sets us all on a glow. We must love him, because he first loved us.

Words fail me to speak about that love of his. It was a love so condescending that he stooped from heaven to reach us, laid aside the royalties of glory, and took upon himself the infirmities of earth. It was a love so lasting that the ages have never dimmed it, nor lessened it by so much as a single atom. It was a love so enduring that the ten thousand provocations of our unbelief and of our sin have never quenched it. Many waters could not quench it, neither could the floods drown it. It was a love so generous that Jesus gave us all: he gave us even his Father and his God, for did, he not say, "My Father and your Father, my God and your God"? He gave us and he gives us this day, himself. He gives us communion with himself; he gives us his blood to wash us; he gives us his righteousness to clothe us; he gives us his life for our example, his throne for our rest at the last. Oh! generous love, nothing cost thou withhold! Thou reservest nothing for thyself; thou givest all to the beloved object. It was a love that was quite disinterested. Jesus had nought to gain. The gain was ours. It was a love most self-sacrificing. His sufferings, how intense! His griefs, how terrible! And all for his sweet love of us who were his enemies!

I would I had a seraph's tongue but for one moment; a tongue of flame with which to speak of my Master! As I cannot have this, I

must be content to say that this ocean of Christ's love is one that is not to be measured. Plunge into it. Ask that you may be swallowed up in it. Pray that it may baptize you, that you may be lost in its overwhelming floods, and that henceforth for you to live may be Christ and to die may be gain. Brethren, the Lord's love be over you, and in you, and in the power of his quickening Spirit may you live through another week, and when we come together again may our hearts retain some of the glow of the affection which I trust we have felt burning within our hearts tonight. To his name be praise! Amen.

## 1 John 5:6 By Water and Blood

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**“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ not by water only, but by water and blood.”-1 John 5:6.**

BY the terms “water” and “blood” we understand the purifying and the pardoning effects of Christ's work for his people. He came to purify them from the power of sin, that they might no longer live in it; this is indicated by the declaration that he “came by water.” He came also to put away the guilt of their sin, that they might not be condemned for it; this is set forth by intimation that he also came “by blood.” We might say that all the Lord's prophet, who came before Christ in a certain sense “came by water.” That is to say, they all sought the purification of the Lord's people. Whether it was Isaiah, whose lips had been touched with the live coal from the altar, or Jeremiah, whose eyes were fountains of tears as he wept over sinners, or Amos, who spoke as a herdman, or Ezekiel, whose message was one of grandeur and sublimity, the object of every one of them was to purge the people from their sins. It was against sin that they all lifted up their voices, yet not of them could pardon sin, and no one of them ever professed to be able to do so. Of the whole of them it must be said that they came by water only, and not by blood.

But Jesus Christ does what the prophets could not do. It is true that he does seek to make his people holy, but it is by his blood that all their sins are for ever put away. John the Baptist was the last and the greatest of all the prophets who came before Christ yet he had to say, “He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.” John never spoke of his own blood having any power to take away sin, but he pointed to Christ and said, “Behold the Lamb, of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” So far as our Lord's first disciples were concerned, he certainly “came by water,” for contact with his unique personality must have tended to purify their lives; yet he also came “by blood” as well as by water, for it was by virtue of his atoning sacrifice that their sins were blotted out, and that they became “accepted in the Beloved.”

The two ordinances of our holy religion were intended, I take it, to sum up the teaching of Christ. The one is baptism, which represents the cleansing of the conscience as the body is washed with water, the death of the soul to the old carnal life, its burial with Christ and its resurrection to a life of holiness. Then comes the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which sets forth, in the broken bread and the poured-out wine, the great truth of Christ's atonement, the fact that he has, by his death, perfected for ever all those who have been set apart unto him.

It is very important that we should always carry in our minds the remembrance of these two truths; first, that Jesus Christ “came by water,” that is, it was his divine purpose to purify his people, and make them holy; and, secondly, that Jesus Christ “came by blood,” that is, it was his grand aim and object to deliver his people from the guilt of sin. These are the two topics upon which I am going to speak to you as to Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me.

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### **I. So, first, Jesus Christ “Came By Water;” it was his divine purpose to purify his people.**

It is manifest that there was an urgent necessity for this purification, for all of us had become as an unclean thing in the sight of God, and even our righteousnesses were as filthy rags. We could not cleanse ourselves, neither could we obtain cleansing through the works of the law. Yet it was imperatively necessary that we should be made holy; for, otherwise, where God is, and where his holy angels dwell, we could never be; and, therefore, what we ourselves could not do, and what the law could not do, “God sending his own Son in to likeness of sinful flesh” has perfectly accomplished.

If any of you ask me how Christ makes his people holy, I would remind you that, when the Spirit of God reveals Jesus Christ to our

heart, we then begin to perceive the exceeding sinfulness of sin. What! did sin stab my Savior to the heart? Did sin nail my Best-beloved to the cross? Then I hate sin with a perfect hatred, and will be revenged upon it. The atonement of Christ gives such an exhibition of the guilt of sin as is not to be so anywhere else; no, not even in to flames of hell; and when a soul sees Christ despised, rejected, wounded, bleeding, and dying because of sin, it realizes how foul and vile a thing sin is, and so is moved to hate it, not only because of its foulness and blackness, but also out of gratitude to Christ who has put it away. Did my Savior love me so much as to bear the dread penalty of my sin? Then I will give, sin no quarter, but seek utterly to destroy it.

"The dearest idol I have known, Whate'er that idol be,"-shall be cast down from the throne which it has usurped that I may worship my gracious God, and him alone.

This gratitude to Christ begets a more and more intense love to Christ and the more we love him, the more we become like him; and becoming like him, of course sin is cast out, and virtue is nourished. Ask any Christian whether he has not found that the best weapon with which to smite his sins has been a nail from Christ's cross or the spear that pierced his side. Men have tried to overcome sin by the reasonings of philosophy, or by arguments fetched from common sense; but those blunt wooden swords have been powerless to destroy it; it is only the sharp two-edged sword of the Spirit the grand doctrine of the love and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that can pierce our sin to the heart, and lay it in the dust. You have, beloved, but to meditate upon his passion to receive the virtue of the water which cowed from his side, and that shall enable you to trample upon your lusts, and to consecrate all your powers and passions to his service.

I appeal to the experience of every Christian here to confirm what I have said,-my brother or sister in Christ was there not great need for Christ to come "by water" to you? For, first, what was your nature Nay, what is it? If you were left to yourself, what might you not become? If circumstances put temptation in your way, and God's grace did not restrain you, what sin might you not commit? Have you not, sometimes, when your feet had almost gone, and your steps had well-nigh slipped, looked down into the depths of the horrible pit of human corruption, and shuddered with alarm at the discovery of possibilities of evil which you had scarcely suspected? Well, then, if you have such a nature as this, you do indeed need the purifying streams from the heart of Christ to make it clean, and you may well pray to him, with Toplady,-

**"Let the water and the blood,  
From thy riven side which flow'd,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."**

Then, next, what about our thoughts? As I walked to this house of prayer to-night, and tried to concentrate my meditations upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ I could not help feeling how mysterious it is that, the more we try to guide our thoughts into right channels, the more determined they seem to be to run towards evil. Have you not sometimes found that, even in your most hallowed moments, some unchaste and vile thought, which you abhor as you hate the very fiend himself, will suddenly come into your mind? Does not blasphemy at times intrude into your prayers? Does it not occasionally happen that the hymn you are singing suggests something the very reverse of praise to God, and that the text of the sermon, or some part of the discourse itself, becomes a peg upon which the devil hangs a temptation to sin? Alas! alas! our thoughts, if left to themselves, are as a cage of unclean birds or a den of wild beasts; and as Hercules needed to turn a stream of water to clean the Augean stable, our Lord Jesus Christ needed to pour rivers of water out of his own heart to cleanse the foul stable of our corrupt thoughts.

Then think of our words. I am not now speaking of carnal man; I am talking of professing Christians. Would any of us like to have all our words printed for a single week? If any of you would, I can honestly say that I would not. One does earnestly try to keep the tongue from evil, and the lips from speaking guile; but, oh! how many idle words, how many frivolous words, how many sharp, angry, hot, unkind words fly from our lips almost before we are aware of it! God forgive us for the sins of the tongue! If we had nothing else far which to praise Christ we ought to bless him to all eternity that he came "by water" to cleanse that tongue which is naturally so foul.

Then look at our actions. John writes truly,"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God;" that is to say, he does not sin wilfully, he does not continue sinning, yet he does sin. Need I try to prove that he does? O beloved, look at your lives since you have known the Lord, and see what sin there has been in them. Can you set even one week's action in the light of God's countenance, and say, "O Lord, my life this week has been perfectly pure"? You know that you cannot. Well then, if, with the utmost possible guard upon your own conduct, with the most diligent check upon your conversation, with the greatest watchfulness concerning your thoughts, you are still made to feel that there is a corrupt nature within you, and that the flesh still lusteth against the spirit, how thankful you ought to, be that Jesus Christ "came by water" that he might purge your nature, and make it clean!

Thus have I shown you the necessity for this purification; now let me try to set before you the power of this “water” which does make the Christian clean. It is not a matter of speculation as to whether Christ does make sinners into saints; he is constantly performing this blessed work, which no power but that, which is divine could ever accomplish. Think for a minute or two of the forces which it has to overcome. There is the old nature of which I have been speaking, and that is not an enemy that can be easily overthrown. Have you ever tried to bind it fast with fetters, and to keep it in chains? That “old Adam” is very strong; and even in aged Christians, who sometimes seem fancy that their corruptions have grown as aged and as feeble, as they themselves are, it has been, alas! only too sadly proved that the “old Adam” does not, become weak so easily as the old man himself does. The opposition of our carnal nature to the grace and work of Christ is so strong that nothing but omnipotence itself can overcome it, yet Jesus Christ so gloriously “came by water” that, he completely conquers the flesh.

Then there is the enmity of the world, which is always in antagonism to Christ and to his people too. Worldlings are always ready to turn us aside, to sin, and they will never help us to walk the narrow way that leadeth unto life. The way of the world is always towards evil, the habits and customs of the world are evil, only evil, and that continually; as the apostle John says, “All that is in the World, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” All these evils continually beset us, and powerful indeed must be that stream which can counteract and overcome them. Yet Jesus Christ does this through coming “by water” as well as by blood.

There is also the devil to be overthrown, and we must never think lightly of his powers. He has overcome many mighty men, and he would easily overpower us if we were left to contend with him in our own unaided strength. Bunyan’s pilgrim found it to be no child’s play to fight with Apollyon, nor shall we.” We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places; “but, blessed be God, we go not to this warfare at our own charges, and greater is he who is with us than all that can be against, us.

Yes, that awful trinity of evil, the world, the flesh, and the devil, shall not be able to overcome even one believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of this, beloved, and let your eyes sparkle with, the delight, of anticipation; you shall one day have no tendencies to sin, you shall then be as pure in nature as the holy angels, you shall then be fit to consort with cherubim and seraphim and the glorified spirits that, day without night, circle the throne of God. And even the Lord God himself, the infinitely pure and holy One, shall not disdain to dwell among you, for then you shall be perfectly free from sin, “without fault before the throne of God.” Not even the all-piercing eye of God shall be able to discover in you any thought of wrong, any word of evil, any art of sin, any corruption of nature, any sloth, or pride, or lust, or temper, or anything contrary to his holy will. Free from all sin for ever are all the who shall stand “before the throne, and before the Lord, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;” and I shall be there, and you shall be there, if here we are trusting in him who “came by water” to “purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Have no doubt concerning it my brother or sister in Jesus. Strong are thy foes, but far stronger is thy glorious Helper. Many and mighty are thine enemies, but almighty is thy Friend. Stern is the conflict that has to be faced, but sure is the victory that shall into due time be won; so press on bravely day by day, and moment by moment, resting even unto blood, striving against sin.

How many of us have already proved the purifying power of this “water” by which Christ came? Of course, I need hardly point out to you that there is no support here for the unscriptural doctrine of baptismal regeneration; the water that flowed from Christ’s side is typical of the cleansing word of the truth that he has revealed, even as he said to his disciples, “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Have you, beloved, felt the cleansing power of the truth as it is in Jesus? If not, God grant that you may realize it now, and to him shall be the praise for ever.

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**II. Now, secondly, I have to remind you that Jesus Christ Came By Blood As Well As By Water: not by water only, but by water and blood; that is to say, it was his grand aim and object, by his atoning sacrifice, to deliver his people from the guilt of sin.**

There are some who are continually trying to get rid of the doctrine of the atonement out of the Bible. Certain philosophical divines, who have just a smattering of theological knowledge, and who seem to forget the couplet,

**“A little learning is a dangerous thing**

**Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring,”-**

try to hold up Christ for our admiration as a great Teacher, as a mighty Prophet, and as our perfect Exemplar; but as to the idea of Christ shedding his blood to wash away sin they cry, “Away with it! Away with it!” And yet, my dear friends, Christ cannot be of the slightest service to any one of us if he did not come “by blood” to put away the guilt of our sin as well as “by water” to purify us from its defilement; for, supposing you and I could, by some mysterious influence, become from this time forth perfectly holy, what, would be the good of that to us? I do not know that it would be any benefit to us at, all if there were no atonement, I think that it would be a

curse rather than a blessing, for we should still be under condemnation on account of the sins which we have already committed. We are even now in the position of condemned criminals; and if there is no atoning sacrifice of Christ to put away the guilt of our many transgressions, and we have to pay the penalty which is the inevitable consequence of our past sins, how intense and indeed intensified must to our anguish as, after being made holy, we have to suffer for the iniquities which we committed before that great change was wrought upon us! I have only to state the matter thus for you to see that such a condition of things is utterly impossible. Oh, no! if I must be lost, I will remain as I am. If there is no pardon for my past transgressions, it is of no avail for me to have purity for the future. If I could become perfectly holy for a time, but should, after all, be cast away from God's presence, I do not want a temporary holiness of that sort, for I do not see how it could be of the slightest possible use to me, and my very nature recoils against even a good thing which would only increase my misery to an intolerable degree.

But, beloved, I have only been supposing for the sake of argument, what is not true, for Jesus Christ did come "by blood" as well as "by water." Paul truly wrote to the Hebrews, "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" and he has for ever put away all the sin of every one who believes in him. That great sacrifice was once for all completed on Calvary, and it is made efficacious to each one of the innumerable host for whom Christ died as soon as by faith he appropriates the blessing to himself, As Joseph Hart sings,-

**"The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Redemption in full through his blood."**

It was by virtue of Christ's atoning sacrifice that Paul was able to say at Antioch what we can truthfully repeat in your hearing to-day, "Be it known unto you therefore, man and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The precious blood of Jesus Christ God's Son, cleanseth from all sin all those who put their trust in him; it is no sooner applied by the Holy Spirit to the heart and conscience than every sin that a man has ever committed ceases to be, and the virtue in Christ's blood is so great that it covers all the sin that the man ever will commit, as John Kent sings,-

**"Here's pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their cast;  
And, oh! my soul, with wonder view,  
For sins to come here's pardon too."**

A believer in Jesus has no record against him in God's book of remembrance. The Lord says to him as he said to Israel of old, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." They are as completely obliterated, annihilated, and destroyed as if they had never been committed. It is this glorious truth which sets Christ apart from all the prophets that came before him, and all his servants who have or will come after him; they all "came by water," seeking to make their message the means of purification to the Lord's people; but Christ came "not by water only but by water and blood," for he came both to purify his people and to put away the guilt of their transgression.

Those who deny the atonement of Christ must have very low views of what God is, and of what is due to his offended majesty. According to them, God is to be insulted, his throne is to be attacked, his crown is to be assailed, and his honor is to be impugned, and yet no adequate recompense is to be made to him. Such persons must also have very low views of sin; they make it out to be a mere trifle which God is to forgive without exacting any penalty for it. They seem to think that, in his mercy, he can put away sin without any reparation to his broken law, and without any satisfaction being rendered to his offended justice. But he who reads his Bible aright knows that all such notions are altogether erroneous; he has learnt, from the Scriptures, that God is inflexibly stern in his justice although he is supremely gracious in his love. God hates sin so much that he had to turn away his face even from his well-beloved Son when he was, by imputation, bearing the sins of his people upon Calvary; and it was that desertion by his Father that wrung from Christ that saddest of all the cries from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But now that Christ has endured the full penalty for his people's sin, God can "be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." God's love can be displayed to the utmost without in any way infringing the rightful claims of his justice, and all his attributes remain absolutely unsullied after the vindication they have received through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

All this has been accomplished because Jesus Christ came "not by water only, but by water and blood." Oh, the power of the precious blood of Jesus! Did you ever feel it, dear friends? If so, you will never doubt the truth of the atonement, for it will be very real to you. Never can I forget the day when I first felt in my soul the power of the blood of Jesus. Christ's blood has the power to put

away sin from the sight of the all-seeing Jehovah; but it also has the power, so far as man is concerned, to give peace to the troubled conscience, rest to the weary heart, joy to the miserable life. No one could ever have been more wretched and sad than I was when under a sense of sin, life had become almost unbearable though I was but a lad; but oh! what a leap my soul gave, from the very depths of despair up to the heights of overflowing joy, when I realized that Christ had come to me “not by water only, but by water and blood,” and that he had put away my sins as far as the East is from the West, so that they should be remembered against me no more for ever!

**“E’er since by faith I saw the stream**

**His flowing wounds supply,**

**Redeeming love has been my theme,**

**And shall be till I die.”**

Remember, my dear hearer, that Jesus Christ must come to you “by blood” or else he will never come to you “by water.” Christ never gives a man holiness of life unless that man accepts him as the great propitiation for sin. Do you ask, “How can Christ come to me by water and by blood?” The only way that I know is the one that I have pointed out to you over and over again; it is this. You are a sinner, lost and undone; Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost. To do this, he had to take the sinner’s place, to bear the sinner’s guilt, and to suffer the penalty that the sinner deserved to suffer. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his strip we are healed.” Have you faith enough to appropriate his work? Perhaps you question whether you may do so. Well, rest assured of this, there never was a sinner who trusted Christ and then was told that he had no right to trust him. Oh, no! he, himself said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,” and he will not cast you out if you come unto him. Can you believe that his blood was shed for you? Dare you rest your soul’s salvation upon the great work of which he said, “It is finished,” ere he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost? Will you now trust Christ as your Substitute and Savior? You know the verses that we often sing,-

**“Just as I am-without one plea**

**But that thy blood was shed for me,**

**And that thou bidd’st me come to thee,**

**O Lamb of God, I come.**

**“Just as I am-and waiting not**

**To rid my soul of one dark blot,**

**To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,**

**O Lamb of God, I come.”**

Is this the language of your heart? Then I venture to say that Christ has come to you, “not by water only but by water and blood;” that Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures, and that God will never punish you for your transgressions as Christ has borne the full penalty for them all. Then, if you have received Christ thus as coming to you by blood, I feel sure that you will also believe that he has come to you by water, to purify you from all defilement, and therefore you will not any longer knowingly and wilfully continue in sin. The gratitude which you must feel in your heart for all that Christ has done for you will constrain you to walk before him in holiness and humility, and to seek to obey his will at all times.

Now, many of us are coming to the table of our Lord to commune with him and with one another, and there we must specially think of how he came to us “not by water only, but by water and blood.” The broken bread will remind us of his body broken for us, and the wine in the cup will bring to our remembrance the precious blood of the new covenant shed for us for the remission of our sins. Oh, what a wonder it is that we, who once were as the prodigal son in the far country, wasting our substance in riotous living, or perhaps even herding among the swine, are now welcomed at our Father’s board among his happy forgiven children! A few years ago, nay, even a few months ago, some of us would not have been spending the Sabbath evening among the Lord’s people in the house of prayer, and it would never have entered into our thoughts that we should be found sitting as honored guests at his table. Our ideas of enjoyment then were very different from what they are now; the laughter of fools was then in our mouth, and perhaps the song of this drunkard issued from our lips. But now, by grace, a blessed change has been wrought in us, for we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. So, as we come to this table of communion, let us come humbly remembering what we once were, thankfully recollecting what Christ has done for us, and earnestly entreating him to continue and complete his good work in us by purifying us with water even as he has already put away our guilt by his blood, and to him shall be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.



# EXPOSITION 1 JOHN

## C H SPURGEON

### 1 John 1

NOTE: These represent all his expositions collected together which is why comments on a single verse may seem either redundant or disconnected.

May that Divine Spirit, who inspired every word of this wonderful letter, bless it to all our hearts as we read it!

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

You remember how John begins his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word" and how, a little later, he says, "In him was life." The Holy Spirit seems to have recalled those expressions to his mind, for he moves him to use them again. Note how clearly, how explicitly, John writes concerning the Logos, the eternal Word. He says, "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life,... that declare we unto you." The facts of Christ's history on earth are recorded by eye-witnesses who could not be deceived concerning them. They exercised their various senses with regard to Christ, — hearing, seeing, and touching him again and again. They were veracious witnesses, and they died in testimony of their faith in what they asserted. And when anything has been heard, seen, inspected, and even touched and handled, by a company of reliable witnesses, the testimony of such witnesses concerning it must be accepted as true.

You know who that is, who it is that John had heard, and seen, and looked upon, and handled, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

The fact that Christ was really in the flesh, that he was no phantom, no shadow mocking the eyes that looked upon him, is exceedingly important, and hence John-(whose style, by the way, in this epistle is precisely like the style which he uses in his Gospel)-John begins by declaring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in his eternity was from the beginning, was really a substantial man, for he says-" We have heard him "-hearing is good evidence, " Which we have seen him with our own eyes; " eye-sight is good, clear evidence, certainly, " Which we have looked upon "- this is better still, for this imports a deliberate, careful, circumspect gaze; but better still- "which our hands have handled," for John had leaned his head on Jesus Christ's bosom, and his hands had often met the real flesh and blood of the living Savior. We need have no doubt about the reality of Christ's incarnation when we have these open eyes and hands to give us evidence.

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

John and his fellow-apostles were eye witnesses of the coming to earth of God in human flesh, — the indwelling of the Word of life in a body like our own,

That same eternal Being who is Very God of Very God, and is worthy to be called essentially Life, was made flesh and dwelt among us, and the Apostles could say-" We beheld his glory."

**1 John 1:2, 3**

The Father delights in his risen Son, no more to suffer and to die, having accomplished all his work; and I am sure that we have fellowship with the Father in that rejoicing. Then think what is the joy of Christ, who has passed through the shades of death, and risen from all the gloom of the sepulcher no more to die. I trust, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, that we have fellowship with him, for we also have risen with him unto newness of life.

**1 John 1:3**

See how he does hammer this nail as if he will drive it fast! How he rings this bell that it may toll the death-

knell of every doubt!

But John, what is the value of fellowship with you, you and your brethren, a parcel of poor fishermen, who wants fellowship with you-hooted, despised, mocked and persecuted in every city—who wants fellowship with you?

**1 John 1:3. And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.**

What a leap from the fisherman to the Father's throne, from the poor, despised son of Zebedee up to the King of Kings! Oh, John, we would have fellowship with thee now! We will have fellowship with thy scorn and spitting, that we may have fellowship with thee, and with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

**1 John 1:3, 4. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.**

Hear ye this, ye people of God! The object of the revelation of Jesus Christ is that you may have joy, — yea, that you may have a heart full of joy, and that you may know what full joy means; for, here below, we get but drops and dashes of joy, unless we are brought into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ; and, then, we have the very joy of God in our souls. Oh, the delight of it! Oh, that you could all know it to the full!

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

I infer from this that everything which is revealed to us in Scripture has for its intention the filling up of the Christian's joy

"There," the apostle seems to say, "if you have doubts, they will kill your joy. Doubt is a great joy-killer; but we have seen him, we have heard him, we have handled him who is the fountain of all true joy. Let no doubts come into your hearts, for these are well-attested facts of which we speak. We live still," saith John, — though, perhaps, when he wrote, he may have been the last survivor of the eleven, — "we live still, by our testimony concerning Christ, to confirm your faith, that your joy may be full."

Some Christians have joy, but there are only a few drops in the bottom of their cup; but the Scriptures were written, and more especially the doctrine of an Incarnate God is revealed to us, that our joy may be full. Why, if you have nothing else to make you glad the fact that Jesus has become brother to you, arrayed in your flesh, should make your joy full.

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

That is to say, God is knowledge, God is truth; God is purity. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." There is no darkness of sin, or ignorance, or error about God.

Not a light, nor the light, though he is both, but that he is light. Scripture uses the term light for knowledge, for purity, for prosperity, for happiness, and for truth. God is light, and then in his usual style, John, who not only tells you a truth but always guards it, adds — "in whom is no darkness at all."

**1 John 1:5-7.**

That is, if we walk in the brightest light we can ever know, and if our fellowship with God is the highest that can be enjoyed this side heaven, we shall still need the cleansing blood of Jesus; and, blessed be God, we shall still have it, and we shall still find that it "cleanseth us from all sin."

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

He who walks in ignorance and sin, is in fellowship with the powers of darkness; but he is certainly not in fellowship with God, who is light

Mark here, this does not mean walking in the darkness of sorrow, for there are many of God's people that walk in the darkness of doubts and fears, and yet they have fellowship with God; nay, they sometimes have fellowship with Christ all the better for the darkness of the path along which they walk, but the darkness here meant is the darkness of sin, the darkness of untruthfulness. If I walk in a lie, or walk in sin, and then profess to have fellowship with God, I have lied, and do not the truth.

**1 John 1:7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, —**

Not to the same degree, but in the same manner-

If you have perpetrated all the sins that ever were committed by men or devils, if you have defiled yourself with all the blackness that could be raked out of the lowermost kennels of hell, if you have spoken the most damnable blasphemies and followed the most outrageous vices, yet Jesus Christ is an infinite Savior, and nothing can exceed the merit of his precious blood.

The sin-offering under the law was only for sins of ignorance. But we have a far better sacrifice for sin than that, for "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Not from sins of ignorance only, but from all sin.

Do you remember the story of Martin Luther when Satan came to him, as he thought, with a long black roll of his sins, which truly might make a swaddling band for the world? To the archenemy Luther said, "Yes, I must own to them all. Have you any more?" So the foul fiend went his way and brought another longer roll, and Martin Luther said, "Yes, yes, I must own to them all. Have you any more?" The accuser of the brethren, being expert at the business, soon supplied him with a further length of charges, till there seemed to be no end to it. Martin waited till no more were forthcoming, and then he cried, "Write at the bottom of the whole account, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'"

**1 John 1:7. We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**

So you see that when we walk the best, when we walk in the light, as he is in the light, when our fellowship is of the highest order, yet still we want daily cleansing. It does not say-mark this O my soul-it does not say "The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed " but "cleanseth." If guilt return, his power may be proved again and again, there is no fear that all my daily slips and shortcomings shall be graciously removed by this precious blood. But there are some who think they are perfectly sanctified and have no sin.

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

So that, in the very highest state to which we can attain in this world, namely, walking in the light, as God is in the light, and having fellowship with him, even then we shall sin, and shall still need the blood of Christ to cleanse us from its stain. So those err exceedingly who say that the Christian man can or does live utterly free from sin. Either they have lowered the standard by which they judge the actions of men, or they excuse themselves on some Antinomian principle, or else they must be altogether ignorant of the truth about the matter; for "if we walk in the light, as God is in the light," and have fellowship with him, still "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;" and, therefore, there is sin needing to be cleansed, for Christ does no work as a superfluity. But what a mercy it is for us to feel the continual cleansing of the precious blood of Jesus, so that, if we sin through ignorance, or if we sin by omission or by commission, that precious blood constantly keeps us so pure, that we can still walk with God!

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

It does not matter either, in what sense we say it. We may try to beguile ourselves with the idea that we say it in some peculiar gospel sense; but "we deceive ourselves" if we say it in any sense whatsoever, for we have sin, and we do sin.

We are walking in darkness when we thus talk of light. It is easy for a blind man to talk of light though he cannot see it; and there are some who boast of very superior light who, nevertheless, are so much in the dark that they cannot even see their own sin.

**1 John 1:9. If we confess our sins, —**

That is the point; and he, who says that he has no sins, will not confess them. He, who believes himself to be perfect, cannot enjoy the blessing described in this 9th verse. To deny that we have any sin, is to walk in darkness, and to show we are without the light which would reveal our sin to us, kind if we are walking in darkness we cannot be in fellowship with God. But to see sin in ourselves from day to day, humbly to confess it, and mourn over it, is to walk in the light; and walking in the light, we shall have fellowship with God who is light. "If we confess our sins," —

**1 John 1:8,9**

Oh, those words, and more especially that glorious word "all!" "This must include the vilest sin that ever

stained human nature, the blackest grime that ever came from the black heart of man. And now John is very careful when he strikes a blow to hit completely. He has already smitten those who say they have no sin, and now he smites those who say they did not at one time have any.

**1 John 1:9, 10. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all, unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**

## 1 John 2

**1 John 2:1. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.**

That you may abstain from it, and abhor it, and not indulge in anything that would lead you towards it

He is anxious that they should not sin, he knows they do, and that if they say they do not, they lie. Still the Christian's object is sinless perfection, and though he will never have it till he gets to heaven, that is all the better because he will always then be pressing forward, and never reckoning that he has attained.

For this we ought to watch and strive, that we sin not.

What then? Is it a hopeless case? Oh, no, far from it; it is a sad case, but there is a remedy for it: "and if any man sin,"-

**1 John 2:1. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:**

Jesus is a sinner's Savior. It is not written, "If any man be holy, he has an advocate."

We are to seek to live- a perfectly holy life, but inasmuch as we constantly fall short of that ideal, here is our comfort; we still have an Advocate, we still have One who undertakes our cause, and pleads for us before his Father's throne.

**1 John 2:1,2**

Come ye, then, to Christ for pardon, whether ye are Jews or Gentiles, whether ye are saints or sinners, whether ye are old or young, whether ye are moral or immoral, for God is both able and willing to forgive all manner of sin because of the propitiation offered by his well-beloved Son "Jesus Christ the righteous."

By which is merit, not only that Jesus Christ died for Gentiles as well as Jews, and for some of all nations, but that there is that in the atonement of Christ which might be sufficient for every creature under heaven if God had so chosen every creature, the limitation lying, not in the value of the atonement itself, but in the design and intention of the Eternal God. God sent his Son to lay down his life for his sheep. We know that Christ redeemed us from among men, so that the redemption is particularly and specially for the elect; yet at the same time the price offered was so precious the blood was so infinite in value, that if every man that ever lived had to be redeemed Christ could have done it. It is this that make us bold to preach the Gospel to every creature, since we know there is no limit in the value of the atonement, though still we know that the design of it is for the chosen people of God alone.

**1 John 2:1-4**

Holy living is the sure fruit and proof of anyone being in Christ. Where it is not manifest, the profession of being in Christ is a lie.

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

Whoever comes to him shall receive deliverance from sin. Neither Jew nor Gentile is exclusively considered in the offering of the atonement of Christ; those for whom he died are of every race, and color, and class, and kin.

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

Obedience is the test of discipleship. Mere head knowledge is all in vain, and all in vain our fears, unless we render a practical obedience to the commandments of Christ. We shall not only savingly know him, but we shall "know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

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

This is a terrible condition for anyone to be in, to say that he knows Christ, and yet to have the Holy Spirit calling him a liar because he is not keeping Christ's commandments. Again I remind you that obedience is essential to Christian discipleship. If we refuse to obey Christ's commandments it is clear that we do not really know the Savior at all, we are not even beginners in the school of

Christ.

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

When every word of his is precious to us and when we strive to live according to his precepts, then we know that "we are in him." This is even more than knowing that we know him, for it is the assurance that we are united to him by a living connection which can never be broken.

Note the gradation: we know him, we are in him we know that we are in him.

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

May the Holy Spirit graciously lead us all to this extraordinary walk of grace, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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

Abiding in Christ helps us to live as Christ lived; not, as one well observes, that we can walk on the water as Christ walked upon it, but that we can walk in our daily life even as he did, because we abide in him.

What a walk would that be! How holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners is the man who tries to walk even as Christ walked.

" Lord, I desire to live as one  
Who bears a blood-bought name,  
As one who fears but grieving thee,  
And knows no other shame."  
As one by whom thy walk below  
Should never be forgot  
As one who fain would keep apart  
From all thou lovest not."

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

The old commandment is the word which we have heard from the beginning, yet it is always fresh and new.

**1 John 2:7-9**

Love is the true test of light, that light which leads us to love God, to love Christ, to love the truth, to love God's people, ay, and to love the whole world of men for their good, this is the love that attests the light we have to be the very light of God.

**1 John 2:8-10. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.**

Love is the great and sure way of abiding in the light, abiding in Christ.

**1 John 2:10**

A loving spirit, kind, generous, forgiving, unselfish, seeking the good of others,-this is one of the best proofs that our natural darkness has gone, and that true spiritual light is within us. Some persons think very much of the doctrine of Christ, but very little of the Spirit of Christ. Let such remember that it is written, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If we do not know what it is to love, then we do not in the Scriptural sense know what it is to live, we are dead. Hatred is the cerement in which the dead soul is wound up, the graveclothes in which it is put away in the tomb; but love is the garment of life in which a truly quickened spirit arrays itself. The one who is full of hatred dwells in darkness, but he that loveth abideth in the light. Note how love and life and light are most blessedly linked to one another.

## **1 John 2:11-13**

“You are old men, and you like to think of old things. The everlasting love of God, the covenant made with Christ before the worlds were formed these are things that are very dear to you; and you prize beyond all other; 'him that is from the beginning.'”

## **1 John 2:11-14.**

Having overcome him, at the first by your faith in Christ you still go on to conquer him by abiding in Christ.

## **1 John 2:13. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.**

“In the days of your strength, you have won the victory which no human power can ever win unaided. You have overcome that wicked one who would easily have overcome you if you had been left to fight him by yourselves. “

## **1 John 2:13. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.**

That is all that little children need to know at first. They may not know the great mysteries that the fathers have fathomed, they may not well know some things that the young men know, but even babes in Christ know the Father, and rejoice in his love.

## **1 John 2:14. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.**

Twice, you see, John says the same thing about the fathers, and he says nothing more concerning them; but truly to “have known him that is from the beginning is practically to know all that even the fathers need to know or can know, for this knowledge includes all other that is worth knowing.

## **1 John 2:14. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.**

Here again John repeats his former statement concerning the young men, but he adds to it “because we are strong and the word of God abideth in you.” There is a purpose in the repetition of each case, it is to emphasize the importance of the apostolic declarations.

## **1 John 2:15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.**

“Your affections are meant for something better than these transient and defiled things; so let not your heart's love flow out to things so soiled and base. 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.'”

## **1 John 2:15. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**

These two things are such deadly opposites that they cannot live together where the love of the father is, there cannot be the love of the world. There is no room in us for two loves. The love of the world is essentially idolatry, and God will not be worshipped side by side with idols. “ If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Does not that text draw a very sharp distinction between those who love the Lord, and those who love him not? Remember children of God, that this is the language of John, the apostle of love; but true love is honest, outspoken, heart-searching, heart-trying. Do not imagine that there is any love to your souls in the heart of the preacher who preaches smooth things, and who flatters you with his “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace. No, the highest, deepest, most heaven-inspired love is that which searches and tries the heart feet there should be any deception there.

## **1 John 2:15-17.**

Everything else is transient, fleeting, and soon passeth away; but he that doeth the will of God has entered into the eternal regions, and he has himself become one of those who abide for ever. Do not be carried away, therefore, from your old firm foundation, and from your eternal union to Christ.

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

That devil's trinity-” the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,”-” is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

## **1 John 2:17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:**

It is only a puff, a phantom, a bubble, a mirage which will melt away as you try to approach it; there is nothing substantial in it.

## **1 John 2:17. But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.**

Not, “ he that doeth some great thing to be seen of men, “ not, “ he that builds a row of almshouses, or leaves a great mass of

money to charity when he dies, because he could not possibly carry it away with him, “not, “he that sounds a trumpet before him to let everybody know what a good man he is;” not, “he that must needs outdistance everybody else;” but, “he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Obedience to the will of God is the pathway to perpetual honor and everlasting joy.

#### **1 John 2:18-20.**

You are taught of God, so you know all that is needful for the attainment of true godliness, and the accomplishment of the divine purposes.

#### **1 John 2:18**

And now, I think, even more than when John wrote, is this the fact for antichrists are multiplying on all sides, and there are even worse evils to come than we have seen as yet; and it therefore behoves Christians to be upon the watch and to let this truth comfort them, that “it is the last time.” Once get through this dispensation, and the battle is ended; even though the dispensation should be protracted beyond our hope and desire, yet, still, once get through it, and it is over. This is to be the last charge of our great adversary and all his hosts. Stand fast, therefore, ye soldiers of the Cross, stand like rocks amidst the onslaught of the waves, and the victory shall yet be yours.

**1 John 2:19. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.**

The worst of men go out from among the best of men, the antichrists go out from the church of Christ. The raw material for a devil was an angel. To make a Judas, you must make him out of an apostle. May God purify his professing church since even in her own loins she breeds adversaries of the faith.

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

The Spirit of God will teach you as you need to know. He will so instruct you that you shall know all that is for your soul's good, and for his own glory.

#### **1 John 2:21-25.**

Not transient life, but eternal life, is the great promise of the covenant of grace, and abiding in Christ we possess it.

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

That which is of man's making is false, “but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

**1 John 2:22, 23. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ.' He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.**

Some pretend to honor the Father while they dishonor the Son, but this can never really be done. Jesus truly said, “I and my Father are one,” so that he that denieth the Son denieth the Father also.

**1 John 2:24. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.**

As it was the truth that was revealed to them at the first, there was no need of a later revelation to correct the mistakes of the first, as some foolishly and falsely teach nowadays.

**1 John 2:25. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.**

Let those that want them have these novelties, these constant changes we who believe in Jesus have something far better, even the promise of eternal life.

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

They would lead you astray if they could so beware of them. “Forewarned is forearmed.”

#### **1 John 2:27, 28.**

And this is one great reason why we are to abide in him; “-

**1 John 2:26, 27. These things hath I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have**

received of him abideth in you,

What a wonderful declaration this is, — not only that we have this holy anointing, but that we have it always.

**1 John 2:27, 28. And ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now little children, abide in him; —**

See how the apostle rings out this note again and again. Our Savior repeated the word “abide” or “remain” many times in the short parable of the Vine, and now John strikes this same silver bell over and over again: “And now, little children, abide in him; —

## 1John 3

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

(Remarking on “behold”) if you never used your eyes to good purpose before, use them so now:

Let the truth of our adoption amaze us, — the adoption of such unworthy ones as we were to so high a relationship “that we should be called the sons of God.”

here is no need to say to whom this last sentence refers; the pronoun “Him” is quite sufficient to indicate our Lord Jesus whom the world knew not. Every living, loving heart must at once have thought of “Him” who is the chief, the firstborn, the only-begotten Son of God.

As we are called the sons of God, we are to be made like his only-begotten Son; and here is the beginning of the likeness, that, as the world did not know him, and therefore crucified him, so it does not know the other sons of God, and therefore spends its malice upon them whenever it can. Yet what a marvellous thing is this, — what a wonder of divine condescension, that we who were the slaves of Satan, the children of disobedience, the heirs of wrath, should be called the sons of God! We can well accept the consequence of such a position without any very great sorrow: “Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

Behold it, wonder at it, and never cease to admire it. Is it not one of the greatest marvels that even God himself has ever wrought that we should be called the sons of God?

**1 John 3:1. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.**

It does not know the Father, then how should it know the children? It did not know the elder Brother, — the firstborn among many brethren, — and as it did not know him, how should it know us?

**1 John 3:2. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”**

I wish that Darwin's theory might be carried out in us as Christians, until, as he talks of an oyster developing into an Arch-bishop of Canterbury, we who at our conversion were little better than the oyster, should go on developing in spiritual things, until we should know what John meant, who said, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

As dear Dr. Hawker said concerning this, here is a chapter in every word and a sermon in every letter. How it opens with a “Behold!” because it is such a striking portion of sacred Scripture, that the Holy Ghost would have us pay particular attention to it. “Behold!” says he, “read other Scriptures if you like, with a glance, but stop here. I have put up a way-mark to tell you there is something eminently worthy of attention buried beneath these words.” “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us.” Consider who we were, and who we are now; ay, and what we feel ourselves to be even when divine grace is powerful in us. And yet, beloved, we are called “the sons of God.” It is said that when one of the learned heathens was translating this, he stopped and said, “No; it cannot be; let it be written ‘Subjects,’ not ‘Sons,’ for it is impossible we should be called “the sons of God.’ “What a high relationship is that of a son to his father! What privileges a son has from his father! What liberties a son may take with his father! and oh! what obedience the son owes to his father, and what love the father feels towards the son! But all that, and more than that, we now have through Christ. “Behold! “ye angels! stop, ye seraphs! here is a thing more wonderful than heaven with its walls of jasper. Behold, universe! open thine eyes, O world. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” Well, we are content to go with him in his humiliation, for we are to be exalted with him.



"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." That is easy to read; but it is not so easy to feel. "Now are we the sons of God." How is it with your heart this morning? Are you in the lowest depths of sorrow and suffering? "Now are you a son of God." Does corruption rise within your spirit, and grace seem like a poor spark trampled under foot? "Beloved, now are you a son of God." Does your faith almost fail you? and are your graces like a candle well nigh blown out by the wind? Fear not, beloved; it is not your graces, it is not your frames, it is not your feelings, on which you are to live: you must live simply by naked faith on Christ. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." With all these things against us, with the foot of the devil on our neck, and the sword in his hand ready to slay us—beloved now in the very depths of our sorrow, wherever we may be—now, as much in the valley as on the mountain, as much in the dungeon as in the palace, as much when broken on the wheel of suffering as when exalted on the wings of triumph—"beloved, now are we the sons of God." "Ah!" but you say, "see how I am arrayed! my graces are not bright; my righteousness does not shine with apparent glory." But read the next: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him." We are not so much like him now, but we have some more refining process to undergo, and death itself, that best of all friends, is yet to wash us clean. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

And that vision will be transforming and transfiguring. The pure in heart see God, and they are pure because they see God. There is both action and reaction, when God has purified us we shall see Christ and when we see Christ as he is, our purification will be complete. When will that day arrive? Oh, for the blessed vision! Meanwhile, let us be content to look at him by faith, and to be ever growing more and more prepared for that brighter vision which is yet to be ours.

Not merely in heaven, or when we come to die, but now, in this place, in our pain, in our sorrow, ay, notwithstanding our imperfections and infirmities, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," —

#### **1 John 3:2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, —**

It is enough to make the lame man leap as the hart to hear that blessed statement, and to know it to be true.

#### **1 John 3:2. And it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**

In proportion to our view of Christ is our likeness to him. Those who never saw him are not like him at all; those who have in a measure seen him are in a measure like him, they who see him as he is are like him. There is a transforming power about the image of Christ when it is seen by the soul: "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

We are made like unto Christ; but when he was here, it did not then appear what he should be. If you had seen the lowly Nazarene, who was "despised and rejected of men," could you have guessed what he will be in his glory when it shall please God to judge the world by Jesus Christ? So, in like manner, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

Every spiritual sight of him is transforming. Our looking at him here makes us what we are, our looking at him at the last shall make us like what he is. Oh! what joy to know that the medicine for our souls is taken in at the eyes of faith, and by the sight of Christ we are healed.

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

Discouragement and despair will not purify you, doubt and darkness will only make you worse than you were before; but the indulgence of this blessed hope that you are to be like Christ will help you to purify yourself, "even as he is pure." Therefore, beloved, have hope in God. Remember that it is one of Satan's tricks and snares to try to discourage you, but it is God's will to increase your hope, for thereby you increase in purity.

The great object of the Christian's hope is perfect purification. If we expect to be like Christ, we look for it in the putting away of sin, and in the girding on of all manner of excellence, and holiness, and loveliness, for therein will lie our likeness to Christ. Oh, that God would give us more and more of this Christ-likeness!

It is the nature of this divine hope, — this hope of being like Christ — that it helps us to grow day by day more like him; and so we purify ourselves, as Christ is pure.

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

This is the best definition of sin that can be given; let none of us ever tolerate any other idea of sin but that it is "the transgression of the law."

And there will never be a better definition of sin than this. However men may philosophically try to mar it, this simple statement will be better than any that they can give us: "Sin is the transgression of the law."

#### **1 John 3:4,5**

Not to let us live in them at ease, not to make sin become a pardonable matter, so that we might indulge in it, and yet hope to escape from its consequences. Oh, no! "He was manifested to take away our sins."

### **1 John 3:5**

What a marvellous thing it was for Christ to bear sin as he did, and yet to have upon him or within him no taint arising from it. You have to go into the world, and you say, "How can we help sinning while we have to mix with so much that is evil?" Well, the Lord Jesus Christ had to mix with evil more than you will ever have to do, for he not only lived in this sinful world, but the transgression of his people was actually laid upon him, so that he came into very close contact with sin: "He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

**1 John 3:5, 6. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.**

That is to say, if sin is the habitual course of our life, we do not truly know the Lord. He who walks with God endeavors with all his might to be free from sin, and he is sanctified by abiding in Christ.

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

Whatever he does, it does not contribute to sin, but is the deadly antagonist of sin,

Believer, read these words in two senses. He was manifested to take away thy sins that thou hast committed; and that he accomplished, when "the just for the unjust," he sustained the penalties of them. And he was manifested to take away the power of thy sins; that is to say, to conquer thy reigning lusts, to take away thine evil imaginations, to purify thee, and make thee like himself. Well, beloved, what a mercy it is that some one was manifested to take away our sins from us! for some of us have been striving a long, long while, to conquer our sins, and we cannot do it. We thought we had driven them out, but they had "chariots of iron," and we could not overcome them; they lived "in the hill country," and we could not get near them. As often as we worsted them in one battle, they came upon us thick and strong, like an army of locusts; when heaps and heaps had been destroyed they seemed as thick as ever. Ah! but here is a thought—they shall all be taken away. "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins;" and so he will. The time will come when you and I shall stand without spot or blemish before the throne of God: for they are "without fault before the throne of God "at this moment, and so shall we be ere long.

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

This plain, simple verse, has been twisted by some who believe in the doctrine of perfection, and they have made it declare that it is possible for some to abide in Christ, and therefore not to sin. But you will remark that it does not say, that some that abide in Christ do not sin; but it says that none who abide in Christ sin. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." Therefore this passage is not to be applied to a few who attain to what is called by our Arminian friends the fourth degree-perfection; but it appertains to all believers; and of every soul in Christ it may be said, that he sinneth not. In reading the Bible, we read it simply as we would read another book. We ought not to read it as a preacher his text, with the intention of making something out of every word; but we should read it as we find it written: "Whosoever abideth in Christ sinneth not." Now we are sure that cannot mean that he does not sin at all, but it means that he sins not habitually, he sins not designedly, he sins not finally, so as to perish. The Bible often calls a man righteous; but that does not mean that he is perfectly righteous. It calls a man a sinner, but it does not imply that he may not have done some good deeds in his life; it means that that is the man's general character. So with the man who abides in Christ: his general character is not that he is a sinner, but that he is a saint—he sinneth not openly wilfully, before men. In his own heart, he has much to confess, but his life before his fellow creatures is such a one that it can be said of him: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; but whosoever sinneth [the sins of this world in which the multitude indulge] hath not seen him, neither known him."

The man who dwells in Christ is the holy man; but the man who lives in sin is no child of God, for he proves by his evil conduct that he has no vital union with Christ. The fruit of Christianity is holiness; and if thy life be a sinful one, if that be the main run and tenor of thy life, thou art none of his.

If this declaration related to any one act of sin, none of us could ever say that we have seen or known him, but it relates to the habit of sin, — if we love sin, and live in sin, if the main course of our life is sinful, then we have "not seen him, neither known him."

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

That is the sign of it. Works are the fruits of grace. "He is righteous,"— not in himself; for mark how graces come in here—"He is righteous, even as HE is righteous." It will not allow our righteousness to be our own, but it brings us to Christ again. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous," not according to his own works, but "even as HE is righteous." Good works prove that; have perfect righteousness in Christ; they do not help the righteousness of Christ, nor yet in any way make me righteous. Good works are of no

use whatever in the matter of justification: the only use they are, is, that they are for our comfort, for the benefit of others, and for the glory of God. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil."

He is practically righteous, he is truly righteous; but let no man talk about being righteous before God while he is wilfully indulging in sin. This cannot be; thou must be divorced from sin, or thou canst not be married to Christ. The gospel demands and also creates holiness of character; and wherever it works effectively upon the heart and conscience, it produces purity in the life.

You must judge a tree by its fruit; if it brings forth good fruit, it is a good tree, and if it brings forth evil fruit, it is an evil tree. Do not be deceived about that matter, for there have been some, who have dreamed of being righteous, and of being the children of God, yet they have lived in sin as others do. They have been self-deceived; it has been a mere dream on which they have relied. Practical godliness is absolutely needful to a true Christian character, and a man is not righteous unless he does that which is righteous.

#### **1 John 3:7. Little children, let no man deceive you:**

Because you are little, you are apt to be deceived. There is a great blessedness in being little children, but there is also some danger connected with such a condition, so we must beware of those who would deceive us.

#### **1 John 3:7. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.**

The test of a man's real character must be what he does, not what he professes; not what he boasts of, but what is really the manner of his life.

#### **1 John 3:8, 9. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.**

He sinneth not with any pleasure, it is not the course of his life. There are, alas! in the best of men, infirmities and imperfections and failures would God these were all removed! Still, the man is not what he used to be; though he is not what he shall be, he is not what he once was.

That is to say, this is not the course, and habit, and tenour of his life; there is sin in much that he does, but he hates it, loathes it, and flees from it.

#### **1 John 3:8. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.**

Ever since he became a devil, he has continued to sin. It was sin that changed the angel into a devil, and a sinner he has always remained.

He did not come to make us easy while under the devil's sway, but to fetch us out from the tyrant's dominion, and lead us to live a godly, sober, righteous, pure life unto his praise and glory.

#### **1 John 3:9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;**

That is to say, he does not live in it, it is not the tenor of his life. He is not outwardly so that others could convict him of it, or inwardly so that his own conscience could chide him with it, a man who loves sin.

#### **1 John 3:9. For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.**

Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin; the new-born life within us keeps us holy. We have our imperfections and infirmities over which we mourn; but no child of God can live in sin, and love it. He hates it; he is like a sheep that may fall into the mire, but he will not wallow in it, as the swine do. As soon as possible, he is up again out of the mud and the filth. He goes sorrowing, with broken bones, when he perceives that he has grieved his God. His life as a whole is a holy life.

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

Love is the essential mark of the true child of God. "God is love;" and, therefore, he that is born of God must love. Hatred, envy, malice, uncharitableness, — these are not the things to be found in the children of God; if they are found in you, you are not one of his children.

What," say you, "does a Christian never sin?" Not with the new nature. The new nature never sins; the old nature sins. It is the darkness which is dark; the light is not darkness. It is not possible that the Christ who dwells in us could sin. What sin there is in a believer comes from the remnants of corruption. The spirit which is implanted never can sin and never can have communion with sin, any more than light can have communion with darkness.

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

It were well if we always remembered that practical godliness is the sort of godliness; that it is not talking religion, but walking religion which proves a man to be sincere; it is not having a religious tongue, but a religious heart; it is not a religious mouth, but a religious foot. The best evidence is the salvation of the soul. Avaunt! talkative; go thy way, thou mere professing formalist! Your ways lead down to hell, and your end shall be destruction; for “He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

An unlovely spirit is also self-condemnatory as being an unholy spirit; in fact, want of love is want of righteousness. There are some who profess to be so righteous that they condemn everybody else, and they have no bowels of compassion for those who are suffering in consequence of their fault. But oh, beloved, it is one thing to hate sin, and it is another thing to hate the sinner! Let your indignation burn against everything that is evil; but still, towards him who has done the wrong have ever the gentle thought of pity, and for him present the prayer that he may leave his sin, and turn unto his gracious God. It may be difficult to reach this point; but there should always be just that happy mixture in the mind and heart of the child of God, — love to the sinner and hatred of his sin.

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

Holiness and love are the marks of the true child of God; and where these are not to be found, a man must not bolster himself up with any notion that salvation is his, for he is no child of God.

**1 John 3:10-12**

Some people try to deceive us with the notion that all men are the children of God; but John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows how false that idea is. Holiness and love distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil.

**1 John 3:11, 12. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.**

So that, when you see a man filled with hate and envy and malice, it is because his own life is not holy. There is no exception to this rule, true holiness and love always go together; where love is absent, holiness must be absent, too.

And there is no hate like that, — the hate of a bad man towards a good one, not for doing him any wrong, but simply for rebuking him by the silent eloquence of his holy life. Men who love sin cannot endure the sight of virtue; and if they cannot kill the good man, they will try to kill his reputation. They sneer, and say, “Ah, he is as bad as others, no doubt, if you could only find him out!” That is exactly the spirit of Cain, “who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.”

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

That was the real evil at the bottom of his great crime; it was the wickedness of Cain's character that made him hate the good that was in Abel; and, therefore, after a while, he slew his brother, “because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.”

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

See, Cain hated Abel, and the world hates the saints. It is the very nature and spirit of the world to hate those who are not of the world.

This hatred is too old for you to wonder at it. If it began with the first man who was born into the world, even with Cain, do not marvel if it should spend some of its fury upon you.

As Cain hated Abel, so worldlings hate the saints, whose holiness is a continual rebuke to the ungodly.

**1 John 3:13-17**

Perhaps he will do it on what he calls “principle.” He thinks it is wrong to help his needy brother, so he says; but however he may put it, the Holy Spirit asks this searching question, “Whose hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

**1 John 3:14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.**

Love becomes the distinguishing mark of the new life.

**1 John 3:14. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.**

No matter though he may be outwardly religious, and may think that, by doing certain external actions, he will save himself, there is no truth at all in his religion, for the very essence of true religion is that a man lives not unto himself, but unto God, and for the good of his fellow-men.

**1 John 3:14-16**

Such self-sacrifice as this is the very highest form of love to the brethren, and is a following of the example of Christ, who "laid down his life for us."

**1 John 3:14,15**

What a warning this is against the evil spirit of hate, revenge, and all that kind of feeling! These things are not compatible with the possession of the life of God. Where hatred lives, there is no life of God in the soul. That evil must be shot to the very heart, by the arrows of almighty grace, or else we are not free from the dominion of the devil. Every man who hates another has the venom of murder in his veins. He may never actually take the deadly weapons into his hand and destroy life; but if he wishes that his brother were out of the way, if he would be glad if no such person existed, that feeling amounts to murder in the judgment of God. It is not the lifting of the dagger, nor the mixing of the poison, that is the essence of the grime of murder, it is the hate that prompts the commission of the deadly deed; so, if we never commit the crime, yet, if the hate be in our heart, we are guilty of murder in the sight of God, and eternal life cannot be abiding in us.

**1 John 3:15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:**

He would get rid of that brother if he could, and he is therefore a murderer in spirit, for the essence of murder is not the dagger or the poison, but the desire to put out of existence or to do the utmost harm to the one who is hated. The essential element of murder lurks within the bosom of all hatred.

**1 John 3:15. And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him**

His action is Cain-like, he is not of the chosen seed, he has not the life of God abiding in him.

**1 John 3:16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, —**

The master-love, the chief love that ever was in this world, —

Indeed, it cannot be there at all; he has the love of himself, and not the love of God, dwelling in him.

**1 John 3:17,18**

Love that consists only of words is utterly worthless, if it is true love, it must prove itself by kind deeds and gracious actions.

**1 John 3:16-19. Because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.**

That is still the test; truthful love proves that "we are of the truth," children of the God of truth, and so assures and tranquillizes our hearts before him. Our hearts shall be calm, confident, and happy before God, when we know that true love flows within them.

**1 John 3:18,19**

**Full assurance comes very much this way, by a practical carrying out of the law of love**

You notice how the apostle constantly writes about knowing. Take your pencil, and underline the word "know" in John's Epistles, and you will be surprised to find how frequently he uses it. He is not one of those who suppose, or fancy, or imagine, or have formed a certain hypothesis; but he knows, and he tells us what he knows, in order that we also may know. Love hath a knowledge which is peculiarly her own, — a full assurance which none can take from her.

**1 John 3:19**

The love that will pass this test will bring a restful assurance of peace to the heart.

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

If you, with your narrow knowledge of right and wrong, — your imperfect understanding of your own motives, — if you find reason to condemn yourself, what must be your position before the bar of the all-seeing, heart-reading God? That little flutter in thy bosom, my friend, that trembling, that uneasiness, what means it? Is not this a forewarning of the sounding of the trumpet of the great assize, when thou wilt have to stand before the Judge of all the earth, and answer for thyself to him? It is easy to deceive thy fellow-man, but it is impossible to deceive thy God.

#### **1 John 3:20-22**

It is not everyone who can have whatever he chooses to ask of God in prayer. This privilege is only granted to those who “keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”

#### **1 John 3:21. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.**

If we can feel in our own bosoms that, by divine grace, we have been led to be honest, and upright, and true, before the Lord, “then have we confidence toward God.”

Other people may condemn us, but that does not matter; they may impute to us wrong motives, and misrepresent us, but that is no concern of ours so long as we have confidence toward God.

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

Notice those conditions of answered prayer; we cannot expect God to grant us our wishes if we do not conform to his will. Holiness has a great deal to do with power in prayer. It is not every man who prays who shall have whatever he asks for; but it is put so here, and it is notable that it is so put, “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” This is not mere legality, this is not a matter of work-mongering. When we become God’s children, he treats us as a father treats his child. You know what you do with a boy who is disobedient; he asks you for something that he wants, and you say, “No, I cannot grant you that; your conduct is such that I cannot let you have the pleasures that otherwise I would be pleased to give you.” But you have another boy, who is very careful in all things to do his father’s will; and you have marked the anxiety of his heart to be obedient to you, and you say, “Yes, my dear child, you may have whatever you want. I know that you would not have asked for it if you had not thought that it would be agreeable to my mind; and as you have asked that which is suitable for me to give, you may have it, and I am glad to give it to you.” So is it in the fatherly discipline of the house of God; if we do those things which are pleasing in his sight, we shall have power to prevail with him in prayer.

Notice the link between confidence as to our rightness and power in prayer. When a child has done wrong, and knows it, he cannot run to his father, and ask for favors as he used to do; he feels timid in his father’s presence because of the sense of his guilt. But if you and I know that we have endeavored with all our heart to love the Lord and our fellow-men and to act righteously in all things, we have a saved confidence which enables us to speak with God as a man speaketh with his friend; and this kind of confidence God greatly loves and he listens to those who possess it. Such people may ask what they will of God; they have learned to bring their minds into conformity with the will of God’s, so the desire of their heart shall be granted to them.

#### **1 John 3:20-23. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.**

Faith worketh by love, we believe on the name of the Lord Jesus, God’s well-beloved and only-begotten Son and that faith leads us to love all who bear his holy name.

#### **1 John 3:23**

Faith and love-faith in Christ, and love to one another,-are here most happily joined together; let us never put them asunder.

#### **1 John 3:23, 24**

That is a great mystery, for us to dwell in God, and for God to dwell in us. It is even so, but only he who knows it can understand it. Experience alone can explain our dwelling in God and God dwelling in us.

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

If he hath given us the Spirit of Christ, then Christ himself is in us, if he hath given us the Spirit of love, that also is the evidence that

Christ himself abideth in us. Oh, for more of that blessed Spirit in every one of us

Though this great truth of our dwelling in God, and God dwelling in us, is a great mystery, it is a mystery concerning which we need not be in doubt if we will learn of the Holy Spirit what he delights to teach us.

Oh, to be more and more under the saved influence of that blessed Spirit!

Holy Spirit, dwell in me, and teach me the meaning of this precious Word, for Christ's sake! Amen.

## 1 John 4

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

If John had need to say that in the early morning of Christianity, I am sure we ought to say it with greater emphasis today. It is certainly true in these days that "many false prophets are gone out into the world," therefore we also must "try the spirits whether they are of God."

A simpleton believes every word that he hears, but "the wise man's eyes are in his head," so he examines what he sees and hears, and does not blindly accept whatever may be told to him. So John says, "Believe not every spirit," —

### 1 John 4:1-3

If there is any question raised about the Deity and the humanity of Christ, do not listen any longer. When you taste the first morsel of meat from a joint, and you find that it is tainted, there is no necessity for you to eat all the rest to see if it is good; and if any man questions the true Divinity and the real humanity of Christ, have nothing to do with him, and give no heed to what he says, for he "is not of God."

**1 John 4:2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:**

If the doctrine of the incarnation of God in Christ is denied, as it was by the first heretics, we may conclude that the Spirit of God is not in such teaching. Any doctrine which dishonors Christ, whether in his person, or his offices, or his atonement, or in any other way, you may at once conclude is not of God, for that which comes from the Spirit of God glorifies Christ. Did not our Lord himself say, concerning the Holy Spirit, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall skew it unto you"?

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

The devil is up early at his evil work; we may sleep, but he never does. This is that spirit of antichrist, whereof "ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

### 1 John 4:3,4

Ye who are trusting in Jesus, and are born again of his Spirit, though you may have only a small influence with others, and are but as little children in your own esteem, yet "ye are of God."

**1 John 4:4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them:**

How? By argument? No; but—

**1 John 4:4. Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.**

If God's own Spirit be in you, ye need not fear any of these enemies "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." If it were a conflict between you and others who had the Spirit of God within them, the conflict would be grievous, and the issue of it would be doubtful; but now that the struggle is between the Spirit of God who is in you and the spirit of error that is in the world, you need have no question about the ultimate result of the battle.

There are two spirits; the Holy Spirit dwells in believers, and the evil spirit dwells in the ungodly. But the Holy Spirit is stronger than the evil spirit, and will certainly overcome him.

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

When people say to you, "Everybody says so-and-so," that is not the reason why you should believe it. "All the men of advanced

thought, — all the scholars of the age, speak thus;" yes, just so: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."

**1 John 4:6. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us.**

The apostles spake as men sent from God, for the Spirit of God dwelt in them; and they alone know the truth who keep to that which has been revealed to us through his holy apostles and prophets.

**1 John 4:5, 6. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.**

If apostolic teaching be denied, those who deny it are not of God, for the Spirit of God was in the apostles, as he is also in all the Lord's true children. By this test we may try many of the spirits of the present day: "He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

The apostle now gives us another infallible test by which we may "try the spirits."

**1 John 4:6,7**

From the abundance of love which was in John's heart, we might almost be startled at the very strong things that he writes against those who are in error, did we not remember that it is only a false charity which winks at error. He is the most loving man who has honesty enough to tell the truth, and to speak out boldly against falsehood. It is very easy to pass through this world believing and saying that everybody is right. That is the way to make a soft path for your own feet, and to show that you only have love to yourself; but sometimes to speak as John the Baptist spoke, or as Martin Luther spoke, is the way to prove that you have true love to others.

**1 John 4:7 Love is of God**

The efficient cause of our love is the Holy Spirit of God. We would never have had a spark of love for Jesus if it had not been bestowed on us by the divine worker. Well said John, "Love is of God." Our love to Christ is one beam from himself, the Sun. Certainly a man can no more naturally love Christ than a horse can fly

**1 John 4:7, 8. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.**

Where there is the spirit of enmity, of envy, of pride, of contention, there is not the Spirit of God. That which makes towards love, we may depend upon it came forth from love; but that which makes towards division, contention, emulation, and strife, is not of God, "for God is love."

**1 John 4:8-10**

By nature, we had no love to God; we were his enemies. We loved sin, and we had ruined ourselves by it; but God took out of his own bosom the only Son he had, that he might make reconciliation for us, and put away our sin. "Herein is love," says the apostle, as though you could find it nowhere else as it is here. Here is the height and depth of love immeasurable; here is love summed up, here is love's climax: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

**1 John 4:9. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.**

There is love in our creation; there is love in providence; but most of all there is love in the gift of Christ for our redemption. The apostle here seems to say, "Now that I have found the great secret of God's love to us; here is the clearest evidence of divine love that ever was or ever can be manifested toward the sons of men."

**1 John 4:9-12.**

We cannot see God, but we can love God; and love, therefore, takes the place of eyes to us. When we love God, it is because he dwells in us. That is better than seeing him, - to have him resident within our spirit, although he is not discernible by these mortal eyes.

**1 John 4:10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

In us there was no love; there was a hatred of God and goodness. The enmity was not on God's side toward us; but on our side toward him. "He loved us and sent his son." The gift of Christ; the needful propitiation for our sins, was all of love on God's part. Justice demanded the propitiation, but love applied it. God could not be just if he pardoned sin without atonement; but the greatness of the love is seen in the fact that it moved the Father to give his Son to an ignominious death, that he might pardon sinners and yet



be just.

**1 John 4:11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.**

Here we have a fact and an argument. We ought to love. We ought to love after God's fashion; not because men loved us. Nor because they deserve anything at our hands. We are too apt to look at the worthiness of those whom we help; but our God is gracious to the unthankful and to the evil. He makes his sun to rise and rain to fall for the unjust as well as for the righteous, therefore we ought to love the unlovely and the unloving. But just as God has a special love for his own people, we who believe in him ought to have a peculiar affection for all who are his.

If such was his great kindness toward us that he denied himself his own Son for our sake, ought we not to be kindly affectioned one toward another?

**1 John 4:12. No man hath seen God at any time.**

We do not need to see him to love him. Love knows how good he is, though she hath not beheld him. Blessed are they who have not seen God, yet who love him with heart, and mind, and strength.

"God dwelleth in us" though we do not see him. The nearest approach we can have to God is by this golden way of love.

**1 John 4:12. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.**

He is not far to seek. If you love one another, God is in you; he dwells in you, he is your nearest and dearest Friend, the Author of all other love. The grace of love comes from the God of love.

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

And his Spirit is the spirit of love. Wherever it comes, it makes man love his fellow-man and seek his good; and if you have that love in your heart, it came from God, and you dwell in God.

**1 John 4:13,14**

John is speaking for himself and the rest of the apostles; for they were eye-witnesses who had seen Christ, and therefore could testify to him.

**1 John 4:13-16.**

These words are very simple, but the lesson they convey is a very deep one. Most of them are monosyllables; but, oh, what marvels of meaning the Holy Spirit enabled the apostle John to put into them!

**1 John 4:14. And we have seen.**

Yes, there is something that we have seen. John writes for himself and his fellow-apostles, and he says, "No man hath seen God at any time," but —

**1 John 4:14. We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.**

John saw him live, and saw him die, and saw him when he had risen from the dead, and saw him as he ascended. So he speaks to the matter of eyesight, and bears testimony that, though we have not seen God, we have, in the person of the representative apostles, seen the Son of God who lived and labored and died for us.

**1 John 4:15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he is God.**

Let Christ be God to you, and you are saved. If, in every deed, and of a truth. You take him to be the Son of God, and consequently rest your eternal hopes on him, God dwells in you, and you dwell in God.

**1 John 4:15, 16**

Is there anyone here who is full of anger, enmity, malice, and envy? If so, let him know that God dwells not in the heart that harbors such abominations. Until these base passions are expelled, and we feel love to all mankind for Christ's sake, God is not in us, for "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The old method, according to Jewish tradition, was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy;" but Christ's new rule is, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." This is the point in which our likeness to God will be seen, for he loved us when we were his enemies, and he expects his children to love their enemies; may he graciously teach us that sacred art!

**1 John 4:16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.**

How far is this true of all of you? How many here can join with the beloved apostle, and say, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us"? We know it; we have felt it; we are under its power. We know it still, it remains a matter of faith to us; we believe it. We have a double hold of it. "We know," we are not agnostics. "We believe," we are not unbelievers.

**1 John 4:16. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.**

This is not mere benevolence; there are many benevolent people who still do not dwell in love. They wish well to their fellow-men; but not to all. They are full of indignation at certain men for the wrong that they have done them. John's words teach us that there is a way of living in which you are in accord with God, and with all mankind; you have passed out of the region of enmity into the realm of love. When you have come there, by the grace of God, then God dwells in you, and you dwell in him.

**1 John 4:17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have a boldness in the day of judgment:**

If we can be to the world, in our poor feeble measure, what God is to it, — fountains of love, dispensaries of goodness, — then we need not be afraid of the verdict even of the great day of judgment.

That is a wonderful expression, "boldness in the day of judgment." According to some, the saints will not be in the day of judgment. Then, what is the use of "boldness in the day of judgment"? As I read my Bible, we shall all be there, and we shall all give an account unto God. I shall be glad to be there, to be judged for the deeds done in my body; not that I hope to be saved by them, but because I shall have a perfect answer to all accusations on account of my sin. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." If I am a believer in Christ, —

**"Bold shall I stand in that grand day,  
For who aught to my charge shall I lay?  
While through thy blood absolved I am  
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."  
Because as he is, so are we in this world.**

Happy Christian men, who can say that? If you live among men as Christ lived among men, if you are a savior to them in your measure, if you love them, if you try to exhibit the lovely traits of character that were in Christ, happy are you.

**1 John 4:17,18**

That is a servile fear, of course, for there is a fear which has no torment in it, that holy fear which even angels feel when they veil their faces in the presence of the Most high. There is no torment in that reverent awe; and the more we have of love towards God, the more of that filial fear shall we have; but that slavish dread, that awful terror which begets within itself dislike, cannot live where true love is planted within the soul:

**"Perfect love casteth out fear."**

**1 John 4:18. There is no fear in love; When a man loves with a perfect love, he escapes from bondage. But perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.**

There is a loving, holy fear, which is never cast out. Filial fear grows as love grows. That sacred dread, that solemn awe of God, we must ever cultivate; but we are not afraid of him. Dear heart, God is your best Friend, your choicest love.

"Yea, mine own God is he," you can say; and you have no fear of him now. You long to approach him. Though he is a consuming fire, you know that he will only consume what you want to have consumed; and will purify you, and make your gold to shine more brightly because the consumable alloy is gone from it. He will not consume you, but only that which would work for your hurt if it were left within you. Refining fire, go through my heart! Consume as thou wilt! I long to have sin consumed, that I may be like my God. Say you not so, my brethren?

If a man is conscious that he intends no harm to anyone, that he wishes good to all mankind, that he loves his God, and loves his fellowmen for God's sake, what has he to fear? He becomes the bravest of the brave, and often finds himself safe and unharmed in places where others dare not go.

**1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.**

Think how much he must have loved you when you were going on in sin. You used to call his ministers hypocrites, his people fools.

His Sabbaths were idle days with you. His precious book was unread. You never sought his grace. Perhaps you used to curse him, perhaps persecute him in his children, and yet he loved you. And when his Spirit came after you, you tried to quench him. You would not attend the place where the arrow had first stuck in your conscience. You went to the theater. You tried to quench the Spirit, but his love would not be mastered by you. He had resolved to have you, and the bridegroom would win your heart.

#### **1 John 4:18-20**

God looked upon us with an eye that saw all our sin and misery, yet he loved us; and he wants us to have a love which, while it sees all the imperfection and all the undesert in our fellow men, yet loves them notwithstanding all. If we do not love those whom we see, the apostle says that we do but lie when we talk of loving God whom we have not seen.

John! John! John! This is a very strong expression. Did we not always understand that John was full of affection? Yes, but he was not one of those oily, sugary sort of people who cannot speak the truth. There is no real love in that kind of man; he has only the mere pretense of love. John speaks sharply because he loves ardently. True love hates that which is unlovely. It is inevitable that a man, who is full of love, should feel intense indignation against that which is contrary to love. Hence the apostle says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

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

The reason for our love is found in free grace. God first loved us, and now we must love him; we cannot help it. It sometimes seems too much for a poor sinner to talk about loving God. If an emmet or a snail were to say that it loved a queen, you would think it strange, that it should look so high for an object of affection; but there is no distance between an insect and a man compared with the distance between man and God. Yet love doth fling a flying bridge from our manhood up to his Godhead. "We love him, because he first loved us." If he could come down to us, we can go up to him. If his love could come down to such unworthy creatures as we are, then our poor love can find wings with which to mount up to him.

#### **1 John 4:20. If a man say, I love God.**

Not, "if a man love God," but if a man say, "I love God." It is a blessed thing to be able to say, "I love God," when God himself can bear witness to the truth of our statement; but the apostle says, If a man say, I love God, —

#### **1 John 4:20. And hateth his brother, he is a liar:**

It is very rude of you, John, to call people liars. But it is not John's rough nature that uses such strong language; it is his gentle nature. When a loving disposition turns its face against evil, it turns against it with great vehemence of holy indignation. You can never judge a man's character by his books. Curiously enough, Mr. Romaine. Of St. Anne's Church, Blackfriars, wrote the most loving books that could be; yet he was a man of very strong temper indeed. Mr. Toplady wrote some of the sharpest things that were ever said about Arminians; but he was the most loving and gentle young man that ever breathed. St. John, full of love and tenderness, hits terribly hard when he comes across a lie. He was so fond of love, that he cannot have it played with, or mocked or mimicked. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar."

#### **1 John 4:20,21**

And the word "brother" is to be understood in the widest possible sense. We are all brothers, springing from the same common parent; and therefore we ought to be philanthropists, lovers of man, loving even the guilty and the worthless, having an earnest desire to do good even to those who do us ill. If we have not yet reached that spirit, we had need begin our true Christian life, at the foot of the cross, by trusting and loving him who there died out of love for sinners; for there only can we learn, in the person of Christ Jesus our Lord, this divine philosophy of love to God and men.

#### **1 John 4:21. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.**

This is that "new commandment" which our Lord gave to his apostles, and through them to his whole church. "That ye love one another as I have loved you." John was, in a special sense, "that disciple whom Jesus loved." It was meet, therefore, that he should be the apostle to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring "this commandment" to the remembrance of any who had forgotten it. "This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." God help us so to do, of his great grace! Amen.

## **1 John 5**

#### **1 John 5:1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:**

These are very simple words, but they contain a great depth of meaning. The teaching conveyed by this Epistle is very profound, though the language is such as even a child can understand. There must be faith in Jesus Christ as the anointed Son of God; otherwise, there is no new birth, no regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

Where there is real faith in Jesus Christ as the Anointed of God, there is the evidence that the new birth has taken place. Let the first, the best, and the clearest proof of our regeneration be the fact that we do verily and in our heart believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Take comfort, believer, from that declaration. You have accepted Jesus as the Christ the anointed of God, so the apostle affirms that you are "born of God." It may be only lately that you have been born again, you may be only a babe in grace; but if you have a true faith in Christ as God's anointed, you are "born of God."

**1 John 5:1. And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.**

If we love the Father, we love the Son. If we love God, we love all his people; all who are born into the divine family are the objects of our affection.

If we really love God with our whole heart, we must equally love Jesus Christ, and we shall also love all his people, for they are one with him.

If you truly love God, you also love his well-beloved and only-begotten Son, and you also love all his children. There cannot be a true love to the Father and a hatred to his family, that is impossible. Judge therefore by this test whether you love God or not.

**1 John 5:2. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.**

For love leads to imitation. If we truly love the children of God we shall imitate them; and they are known by these distinguishing characteristics, that they love their Heavenly Father, and keep his commandments.

**1 John 5:2, 3. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments:**

Not that we talk about our experience; not, that we use endearing expressions concerning the Savior; not, that we are attentive to outward religious ordinances; but "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." A holy life is the best possible proof of true love to God.

Love is a practical thing; love without obedience is a mere pretense. True love shows itself by seeking to please the one who is loved. May God the Holy Ghost work in us perfect obedience to the commands of God, that we may prove that we really do love him!

**1 John 5:3. And his commandments are not grievous.**

To his people, they are charming; not grievous. They delight themselves in the law of God; and they only wish that they could be perfectly conformed to the divine will.

Obedience is the flower of love. Where obedience to God does not exist, no love to God exists. It is a mockery for us to talk about emotions of the heart if there are not actions that correspond with them.

**1 John 5:4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**

And the apostle gives a description of what kind of faith it is that overcometh the world.

This is the conquering weapon; he who truly believes in Jesus cannot be overthrown by the combined forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Remember the lesson that Haman learned when he contended in vain against Mordecai because Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews, and learn that they who belong to Christ shall, like Christ be more than conquerors.

**1 John 5:4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;**

The new life is the conquering life; the old must give place to the new. The world, that is one day to be finally overthrown, is already overcome by the child of God.

**1 John 5:4. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**

For it brings a better and brighter world before us; and, opening to us the eternal, takes away from us the charms and allurements of the temporal.

**1 John 5:5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**

No one else can overcome the world; but where there is true faith in Christ, it creates within the heart a holy valor by which the conquest of the world is achieved. The law tells us to overcome the world, but the gospel of God's grace enables us to do it. The legal spirit know that it ought to conquer the world, but the evangelical spirit does conquer it.

Let that truth be firmly fixed in your mind, and nerve you in your conflict with the world. The old cry, Athanasius contra mundum, "Athanasius against the world," may be uttered by every believer in Jesus into Christianus contra mundum." Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

**1 John 5:5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?**

So that, it is faith in Jesus which is, first of all, the evidence of the new birth, and which is, afterwards, the weapon wielded by the new-born soul, with which it fights till it gains the victory over the world.

**1 John 5:6. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only,—**

Cleansing us as to our lives: "not by water only,"—

**1 John 5:6. But by water and blood.**

The blood which takes away the guilt of our offenses. There is a double cure for us in Christ Jesus our Lord; first, the putting away of all our past guilt; and, then, the delivering of our hearts from defilement, so that we live after a holy fashion.

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

The cleansing of the outward life does not stand alone, but it is accompanied by the putting away of sin from the heart. The two must go together; and no man will ever rightly value the cleansing water unless he equally values the atoning blood. It is said, by some, that the preaching of the doctrine of the full and free forgiveness of sin, which is bestowed upon all who exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. will lead men to carelessness of life; but it has quite the opposite effect. The cleansing of the life, by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word, becomes incumbent upon us when once we are washed from sin in the precious blood of Jesus. The atonement is the true guarantee of holiness.

**1 John 5:6, 7. And if it the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven,—**

Or, "witness in heaven,"—

Thus all the Persons in the blessed Trinity confirm the faith of the Christian; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear united witness to the faith which God himself gives us.

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

Blessed is the man who has that threefold witness,—the Spirit of God quickening him, the water cleansing his daily life, and the blood delivering his conscience from trouble, because he is delivered from sin by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

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

What a blessing it is for us to get the witness of these three, even here on earth, in the new life which is created within our souls by the Holy Spirit, the daily cleansing of our life by that same blessed Spirit through the Word, and the continual application by the Spirit of that precious blood by which peace is given to the conscience, and sin is put away from the heart.

Three candles in the room, but the light is one, three witnesses to our heart, but the witness is the same. If we have the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, we know that we have received the truth.

**1 John 5:9. If we receive the witness of men,—**

And we are constantly obliged to do that, for we could not get on at all if we did not believe Our fellow-men; yet—

**1 John 5:9, 10. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself:**

That very faith becomes to him the best witness, and he himself is able to confirm the witness of his faith that he is a partaker of the salvation of Christ.

What better witness than this could he have?

**1 John 5:10. Because he believeth not God hath made him a liar;”-**

He need not actually say that God is a liar; the fact that he does not believe him has practically made out that God is a liar. How many of us are there to whom this passage applies?” He that believeth not God hath made him a liar;”-

**1 John 5:10. Because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.**

Is this true concerning anyone here! If so, perhaps if you have not been aware of the extent of your guilt. You have remained unbelievers out of sheer carelessness, out of neglect of the Word. I pray you, rest not in such a state of mind and heart now that you are informed by the Spirit of God that, by your unbelief, you are making God’s liar. Who would wilfully commit that great sin? Let us shudder at the thought of the bare possibility of such guilt as this.

**1 John 5:10, 11. He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.**

That is the gospel in brief, what Luther would have called a little Bible, containing a condensation of the whole revelation of God.

**1 John 5:11**

Our only hope lies in Christ; but there is life for Us in Christ and life eternal, if we do but believe in him.

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

Ah, then, my soul, if thou hast, by faith, embraced the Son of God, thou hast a life which can never die! Thou hast the life of God within thee; thou hast heaven begun within thee; and thou hast it now. Dear hearer, hast thou the Son of God? Hast thou taken him to thyself by a distinct believing grasp, saying, “This Christ shall be mine,—this blessed Jesus shall be my Savior”? Then, you have the apostle’s inspired declaration, “He that hath the Son hath life;” and his other declaration is equally true, “He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

**1 John 5:12. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.**

He may exist; he may have that which may be called moral, physical, or animal life; but there is such a thing as existing, ay, and existing for ever, without even a particle of “life” in the apostle’s sense of the word, in the Scriptural sense of the word; and blessed and happy are those who do not merely exist, but who have, by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, been brought into that living inner circle, and have been made to live, really to live in Christ.

You exist, and you always will exist, but true life is not yours if you have not Christ as your Savior. Life is something infinitely superior to mere existence: “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

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

The apostle said that they did believe, yet he wrote to them that they might believe on the name of the Son of God; because, he that believeth needs to believe more,—more as to matter, and more as to the firmness of the grip of his faith. There are some who do really believe on Christ who do not know that they have eternal life. They have it, but they scarcely realize that they have it; they are afraid to believe that it is theirs. But, here, the Holy Ghost assures us, through the apostle, that those who believe on the name of the Son of God have eternal life. Oh, what a comfort this is! Then, you can never perish. There are some who say that you can fall from grace; but how can that be? What kind of life would that be? It would be temporary life. But the Scripture saith, He that believeth On the Son hath everlasting life.” Then, if it be everlasting, it is everlasting, and there cannot be any end to it. Our Lord Jesus Christ said to the woman at the well of Sychar, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

**1 John 5:13, 14. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:**

First we believe, and so we prove that we have eternal life; then we climb up to the full assurance of faith; from full assurance we mount still higher to the clear conviction that God hears prayer; and from that height we mount yet higher to the assured confidence that he will hear our prayer.

A very wonderful thing is prayer, yet it is not every man's prayer that is heard, but he that hath the life of God within him shall have his petitions granted because the Holy Spirit will move him to ask in accordance with the will of God.

**1 John 5:14. And this is the confidence that, we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:**

We do not wish to have a more unlimited promise than that; we do not ask God to hear our prayer if it is not according to his will. The true child of God does not wish to have his own will; but he says, "No, Lord; thou knowest much better than I do what to grant; so, when my will is contrary to thy will, thy will, not mine, be done! This is as gracious an assurance of answers to prayer as the true children of God wish to have: If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

**1 John 5:15. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.**

That is, before we actually receive the answers to our petitions. After the prayer of faith, we know that our request has been granted, and we act upon the belief that we have already received what we asked of God. A true man's promise is as good as the performance of it; we unhesitatingly take a note of hand, or a promise to pay, when we know that it is drawn upon a reliable firm. We treat it as money; it passes from hand to hand, through the bankers, and is regarded as if it were the coin itself;—then, shall we not treat our God in this fashion when we have his promise to pay or to give? We have pleaded it in prayer; so, let us rise from our knees, not merely hoping that we shall receive what we have asked, but believing that we shall surely have it: "If we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

**1 John 5:15, 16. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death,—**

What then? He shall run all over the place, and tell everybody of it? Oh, no! that is not what the apostle says; yet I have seen something like that carried into practice. But when I look into this inspired Book, I do not see anything about talking of this sin to our fellow-men, but something is said about talking of it to God, and this is what every true Christian should do. If you see any man sin, mind that you ask for pardon for the erring one: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death," —

**1 John 5:16, 17. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.**

There, are multitudes of such sins; but there is a place, beyond which, if a man, passes in sin, he becomes henceforth dead, and utterly insensible; and he will never be quickened, and never be saved. If we knew a man to be in such a condition as that, the apostle's words would apply to such a case. "I do not say that he shall pray for it" But, as we cannot tell that any man is in that condition, it is well for us to ask for grace to be able to pray for every sinner, however great his sin may be. We know that "all unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death:"

**1 John 5:16. He shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.**

John does not say that he may not; and as we cannot be absolutely rare that any sin is a sin unto death, this verse does not prevent us from praying for any man, whatever his sin may have been. John says, writing under inspiration, "There is a sin unto death." "What is it?" someone asks. Ah! would you not like to know? If you did know that, you could go and commit all other sins except that one, could you not; but would that be any help to your piety? Certainly not. You know that, sometimes, a notice to this effect is put up as a warning, "Man-traps and spring guns set on these premises;" but do you go, and knock at the door, and say, "Will you kindly tell me where the man-traps and spring guns are?" No, for it is the fact that you do not know where they are that keeps you out of the premises. In like manner, somewhere in the fields of sin, there is one great man-trap which John calls "a sin unto death;" but you need not want to know what that sin is, nor where that trap is set; your business is to keep as far away from all sin as ever you can, whether it is unto death, or not unto death.

**1 John 5:17. All unrighteousness is sin:**

If a thing is not right, — if it is not right all round, it is sin, be you sure of that. I heard, the other day, of a man who was said to be a splendid Christian Godwards, but a wretched creature manwards; but there cannot be such a monstrosity as that. Such a man as that was not a Christian at all. Our righteousness, if it is real and true, must be an all-round righteousness, towards men as well as

towards God.

## **1 John 5:16-18**

He who has committed the sin which is unto death have no desire for forgiveness, he will never repent, he will never seek faith in Christ but he will continue hardened and unbelieving; he will henceforth never be the subject of holy influences, for he has crossed over into that dark region of despair where hope and mercy never come.

Perhaps some of you think that you have committed that unpardonable sin, and are at this moment grieving over it. If so, it is clear that you cannot have committed that sin, or else you could not grieve over it. If you have any fear concerning it, you have not committed that sin which is unto death, for even fear is a sign of life. Whoever repents of sin and trusts in Jesus Christ is freely and fully forgiven, therefore it is clear that he has not committed a sin which will not be forgiven. There is much in this passage to make us prayerful and watchful, but there is nothing here to make a single troubled heart feel anything like despair. He that is born again, born from above, can never commit this unpardonable sin. He is kept from it; "that wicked one" cannot even touch him, for he is preserved by sovereign grace against this dreadful damage to his soul.

You need not be curious to enquire what this unpardonable sin is. I will give you an old illustration of mine concerning it. You may sometimes have seen a notice put up on certain estates in the country, "Man-traps and spring guns set here," but, if so, did you ever go round to the front door of the mansion, and say, "If you please will you tell me where the man-traps are, and whereabouts the spring guns are set?" If you had asked that question, the answer would have been, "It is the very purpose of this warning not to tell you where they are, for you have no business to trespass there at all." So, "all unrighteousness is sin," and you are warned to keep clear of it." There is a sin unto death," but you are not told what that sin is on purpose that you may, by the grace of God, keep clear of sin altogether.

**1 John 5:17, 18. And there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.**

That is to say, sin is not the bent of his renewed nature; it would not be a fair description of his life to say that he was living a sinful life. There are spots in the sun, but the sun itself is a great mass of brightness. So is it with the Christian's life; it is not a sinful life although there are imperfections in it.

**1 John 5:18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;**

That is to say, that is not the bent and current of his life. He makes mistakes, and he falls into errors, and he sins; but that is not the habitual description of his life.

**1 John 5:18–21. But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we knew that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.**

At the time of the Reformation, there was a general order that this text should be put round the communion tables. I think it is time that it was put round the communion tables again. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols;"—for that is one place where idols are often found, though not by any means the only one.

**1 John 5:19 The whole world lieth in wickedness.**

Some think that the old gospel cannot be right because everybody says it is out of date and wrong. That is one reason for being the more sure that it is right, for the world lies in the wicked one, and its judgment is under his sway. What are multitudes when they are all under the influence of the father of lies? The grandest majority in the world is a minority of one when that man is on God's side

**1 John 5:19-21**

After the Reformation in England, there was a certain part of the church, called the rood-loft, where the crucifix used to be, and it was ordered by the Reformers, when "the holy rood" was taken away, that these words should be printed in capital letters in its place,-

"Little Children Keep Yourselves From Idols." This was a very admirable arrangement, and this text might very profitably be put up in a good many Ritualistic churches now, instead of the Agnus Dei and the crucifix,—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Might we not also say to many a mother and many a father concerning their children, and to many a lover of money and hungerer after gold, "Keep yourselves from idols"? Idolatry will intrude itself in one form or another. Some idolize themselves; they look in the glass, and there see the face of their god. O beware of all idolatry!" Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." We may very well say "Amen" to that.



**1 John 5:21. Amen.**

And we say, "Amen; so let it be."