



# PT Butler

## Bible Study Notebooks

### Study of 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> John

prepared by P. T. Butler Th.D

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These Bible study notes are provided for your use in the preparation of teaching the holy scriptures. They were meticulously prepared over many years to serve the Kingdom of God and aid in the growth of Christians of any age. Please use them in combination with prayer and diligence to promote the clear and honest declaration of God's word.

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**TEACHER'S NOTES 1 JOHN 1:1-10**

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

John starts his letter with "...that which we have seen..." because the basis of the Christian life (Christianity) is historical, empirical, eye-witnessed facts! The basis of Christianity is not feeling, nor subjectivism. We have faith and hope because of what was done—in time, in history, objectively. The basis of the Christian life is not speculation, not philosophy. Christianity is not "a religion"—it is the absolute, exclusive, ultimate truth of life! All of life here and hereafter makes sense only through the perspective of Biblical Christianity. Without it "all is vanity and a striving after wind." Clinton Gill says in his College Press commentary on First John, "Christian life is a personal encounter with God in the Person of Jesus. It was never intended...to become a moralistic ethic or a legalistic religion...the touch-stone of the Christian life is the historic fact of the incarnation...it is to replace philosophical uncertainty with historic reality that John wrote both his Gospel and the Epistles which bear his name..." To have a personal encounter with someone you must know who that person is, what that person is (character), and what that person thinks and wills. "Encounter" cannot be based on our subjective, presupposed evaluation of another, but what, in fact, another really is, and what, in fact, another wants. That is why John begins his letter assuring us of its objectivity! He would have us know the identity and will of Jesus Christ in an objective encounter!

"The word of life," refers to the fact that Jesus Christ was "The Word" Incarnated (personified) see John 1:1-18. We are so accustomed to thinking of life in a "biological" (fleshly) sense, we have difficulty associating "Word" with "Life." But, in reality, since the flesh is composed of nothing but dust (matter), our "life" (our personhood) is really best understood as "our word." You are what you know, think, and express (in both words and deeds—but mainly in words). Jesus made this plain when he said, "What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart..." (Matt. 15:18). Jesus certainly demonstrated that his words were life. All he had to do was speak a word and: (a) biological life came into existence (new eyes, limbs, ears, etc.); (b) dead people came back to live in their dead bodies (i.e. "resurrections"); (c) matter came into existence (loaves, fish, wine, etc.); (d) creation obeyed his word (the seas, the winds, the trees, etc.); (e) spiritual beings (demons and angels) obeyed his word. Jesus demonstrated that his words were his character. He said he loved and he did. He said he would be faithful, and he was. He said he had power, and he demonstrated it. He said he would not lie, and he did not. He said he would lay down his life as an atonement and that he would be raised again to a glorified life, and he was. So, John says, "We saw, heard and touched that word of life....that living, eternal, infinite word of life." John is not just speculating or philosophizing—he is talking about empirical evidence of "Life."

The Bible speaks of the "Word" as being alive, Heb. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 1:22-23. In Jesus's parable of the sower, the "seed" is the Word of God (Lk. 8:11) and when sown in the hearts of men it "produces of itself" (Greek in Mark 4:26-29 is *automate*, i.e., "automatically").

So, words or “Word” live and since God’s Word is omnipotent, omniscient and infinite, that is the extent to which it lives. That infinitely, living, Word was “manifested” (demonstrated, objectified, evidenced, personified) in history, empirically, scientifically, incarnate (in the flesh). It was evidenced to human beings—hard-headed, skeptical, non-credulous, theologically-biased human beings just like we are! Jews had a more difficult time accepting the idea of God becoming Incarnated than non-Jews! The apostles and other first believers in Jesus were Jews. They had been taught all their lives that God could not become flesh! They had been taught all their life that their Messiah was not to be humiliated! They would not believe just any “idle tale” or “myth” (Lk. 24:11; 2 Pet. 1:16-21). They would not believe Jesus was who he claimed to be until they saw and touched his resurrected body! They were not gullible, neurotic, superstitious dolts. They were not idealistic, philosophical dreamers. They were every-day working people who believed in what they could see and touch. So, that was how God sent his “Living Word” into the world—in a human body, born as a baby in a barn, reared in a carpenter’s shop. This Incarnated-Son had a mother, sisters and brothers; he ate, drank, walked, slept, tired, wept, and bled. The Living Word was no longer coming to human beings “second-handed,” through human prophets, but “first-handed,” in Person, the Original, the One and Only “Son of God.” If the world rejects this “manifestation” of the “Living Word” it rejects the most, the best, the final evidence—there will be no more evidence from God about redemption!

The “we” of 1:1-4 is the “editorial, We,” meaning, the apostles (or eye-witnesses) of Christ’s life. Later in this epistle, John uses “we” to mean both apostles and all Christians and/or readers of his epistle (e.g., 1:6,7,8,9,10; 2:1,3, etc.). But the “We” who saw the Word is restricted, of course, to apostles and/or eyewitnesses. You and I have not “seen” the Word with physical eyes (cf. Jn. 20:29; 1 Pet. 1:8), but we may “see” by faith, trusting in the competency, accuracy, and fidelity of the eye-witnessed accounts (the Gospel records) (see 2 Cor. 4:18; 5:7). Writers use this mode of expression all the time when writing to an audience which has not seen what the writer has seen physically, expecting their readers to “see” by taking their word for what they (the writers) have seen first-hand. Writers (e.g. newspaper reporters, historians, archaeologists, etc., etc.) often use the word “We” intending their readers to see vicariously. How do you see a Word? How do you see an idea? You see a word or an idea when it is “set in motion.” Physical sight is dependent upon motion. Motion is dependent upon reference points. When an idea, thought, desire, ambition or word is acted out, put into motion, then it is seen. Whenever God gave a “word” or ‘words” to a prophet, those words symbolized some action (of God) the prophet had seen in the past. That is what they communicated. They communicated “visions, dreams, and the future” in “words” or symbols which they had experienced “in motion” in some other situation. After all, human beings have no other way of communicating ideas or other “unseeable” things except to use “words” or symbols of what they have experienced. But when God wanted to give man his ultimate demonstration of his “Word” he sent the Divine Actor into the world in a body, to act out his “Word” (see Heb. 10:1-10; John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; 2 Pet. 1:16-21). Men were eye-witnesses of his majesty—his majesty was not mythological!

On the human level, we participate in other people's joys, sorrows, ideas, victories, losses, and personality-quirks through their words. Although far removed from them by space—although out of sight and touch and hearing, if they write letters to us we can weep with them, laugh with them, very nearly “feel” with them—just through their words. On the other hand, if we have people within arms length, able to touch them, look at them—if they cannot speak or write, it is terribly frustrating trying to “share” or participate with them. We even speak of those whose minds and words become senile or mentally aberrant, as, “not here”—“out of touch with reality,” or we say we “don't know them anymore,” they are “not the same person.” So, on the infinite level, the Divine level, God is certainly capable of “sharing” with us, and we with him, through his “Living and abiding Word,” even though his “Word” is no longer Incarnate, in a body, among us. Remember this, when God, the Word, was here in the flesh in Christ, he touched people, looked at people, spoke to people, even worked miracles on some and in the presence of some who did not participate or “share” with him in his life, his will, his grace his forgiveness, or his joy. They were beneficiaries of his miracles, his touch, his looks, but to share in his life and Person required believing his words and obeying his words (classic illustration, the parable of the Prodigal and Elder sons, Lk. 15—both present with the father but not sharing because they disobeyed the father's will and word).

God is called “light” because that is the best symbol of his essence. The human word “light” symbolizes many things or essences to human beings—energy (life), power, illumination, warmth, safety or security, reality or truth, healing, awesomeness or blinding, beauty or color. What better word in the human language to use to symbolize the essence of God? “Light” is no more obscure than “love”! “Love” lends itself more to being relative than “light.” “Light” is something we experience physically----“love” is experienced only when some kindness or helpfulness is done. And, of course, “kindness” and “helpfulness” could be defined relatively or subjectively. Of course, God is more than “light.” He is the source of all light. He is the Creator of all light—he precedes light. Without him there is no light. Without him there is nothing. He created something out of nothing (“ex nihilo”). So, whatever light there is, is from God. God is not just like light—he is light—and more than light!

John is not talking about physical “darkness.” He is using “darkness” as a metaphor (a figure of speech denoting some kind of comparison). Concerning humanity, the Bible uses “darkness” to represent ignorance (Job 37:19), calamity (Psa. 107:10), death (Psa. 88:12), wickedness (Prov. 2:13; Jn. 3:19), and damnation or hell (Matt. 22:13). In the redemptive work of Christ, God has conquered “darkness” in all the forms mentioned above (2 Cor. 4:6; Lk. 22:53; Eph. 6:12). So, what John means in 1:6 is, “if we say we are sharing with Christ (or “communing,” Greek koinonian with Christ) who is “Light” (life, illumination, safety, reality, beauty, etc.) while we walk (live) in “darkness” (ignorance, wickedness, despondency, death, damnation) we lie (Gr. pseudometha—we are “pseudo-Christians) and are not doing (Greek ou poioumen) the truth.” Yes, physical darkness (night) was made by God and made for the good of human beings in fleshly bodies. But it is frightening how wicked men seem to seek even physical darkness to do their “deeds of darkness.” But remember, John is not talking about physical darkness. He is talking about intellectual, moral, spiritual darkness! There is nothing good at all in intellectual, moral or spiritual

darkness. Those who do not know Christ and participate in his “light” are in mental, moral and spiritual darkness, no matter how much else they may know or how morally good they may be by their own standards, or how religious (“spiritual”) they may be in their “religion.” The true and only Light is objectified in the Person of Jesus Christ!!!

What we have just said about the contrast between “light” and “darkness” bears on this. Truth, reality, life and security do not have their source or origin in human subjectivism. The origin for “light” is in an objective, individual, distinctive, exclusive Person, Jesus Christ. And that is a fact because it is that Person whose death atones for all human sin. And that is a fact because that Person was the sinless Person who died and rose from the dead—objectively, not subjectively. Now all this objectivity may produce some subjective peace, relief, joy, or hope in every human being who believes it and accepts it by grace, and lives a life of grateful obedience to it. But its origin and source is objectified in the redemptive work of one Person—Jesus Christ. That is why the cleansing blood of Jesus is said to be “in the light.” What Jesus objectively, historically, actualized for mankind, must be known, believed, trusted, morally chosen, and spiritually lived (obeyed) by mankind. What Jesus did for human beings provides life (light). If a human wants it, he must “walk” (live) in what Jesus did. A person must do more than just “feel” it. There is life-objectivity to the “Light” which Jesus objectively provides. The efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ applies only to those who “walk” (live) a certain, stipulated, fixed, kind of life—the kind of life stipulated by the commandments of Jesus Christ! To say we share in his blood and then not walk in his stipulated way makes us liars!

First, for any person (other than Jesus) to say he has no sin is to call God a liar. God’s infallible, inerrant word says “all have sinned” and his word tells us that we will never attain sinlessness apart from the imputed righteousness afforded us by the atonement of the One sinless Person, Jesus Christ. To claim sinlessness on one’s own is ignorance (“darkness”)—both mental and moral, for both the Bible and our consciences tell us we do sin. To say we have no sins means we are walking in darkness, not in the light. If we call God a liar, we deceive ourselves, because God does not lie, and he has said we sin! If we say we have no sin, our consciences tell us we have, and we walk in guilt which is to walk in “darkness.” We are not honest and we are not walking in the light of divine reality. Apart from what God’s word says about sin, man walks (lives, moves) in darkness (ignorance, moral rebellion, damnation). Apart from God man calls sin, “psychological complexes, neuroses, psychoses, disadvantaged-environmental-reaction, chemical imbalance.” And they try to blast it out of memory and living by transferring the blame to parents, society, evolutionary-genetic-chance, and socialistic welfare funding. The Christian has transferred his sin to Christ who willingly loved the world and “became sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:14-21). No! The Christian does not deserve that kind of grace and love. But the Christian gratefully and obediently trusts in it by the risk of faith based on objective evidence that it is so!

**TEACHER'S NOTES 1 JOHN 2:1-29**

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The word “advocate” is a translation of the Greek word *parakleton* which is the word often used by John in his fourth Gospel and translated, “Comforter.” Literally, it means, “one called alongside to help.” It is a word rich with meaning. It might be translated, “supporter, backer, helper, counselor, consoler,” and in this context it has the idea of “one who strengthens, helps, and counsels with such authority as a legal advocate has for his client.” All human creatures need an Advocate to stand between them and their Creator—their infinite, absolute and final Judge. This absolute judge, by his very nature (and that is somewhat revealed in creation) must execute absolute justice upon all moral creatures who have violated his moral demands (i.e., his law). All moral creatures stand condemned by their violations and are therefore (all except one—Jesus Christ) ineligible, as well as incapable, of winning their justification or acquittal. Any being eligible and capable of pleading for justification or innocence would be one who had lived in creature circumstances (in the flesh), who had been subject to making moral decisions, and who had made all the right (lawful) and none of the wrong decisions. Jesus Christ of Nazareth was that Person! His resurrection from the dead is the one historical fact that proves to us Almighty God has accepted him as “advocate” (because of his “propitiation”) on behalf of the rest of humankind! He is the only one “worthy” (Rev. 5:1-14).

The Lord has not left us without some objective standard by which we may be sure we “know” him! He has not left us to depend upon confusing, vacillating, impossible, subjective feelings as a basis for “knowing” him. John says it plainly here, “By this we may be sure that we know (Greek *ginowskomen*, present, active participle) him, if we keep his commandments.” This could be literally translated, “In this we are knowing that we got to know, and still do know, him; because we are keeping his commandments.” Knowledge apart from obedience is no knowledge at all! A knowledge of God’s word is meaningless in the life of one who does not practice obeying it. Of course, “keeping his commandments” has to be understood in a sense less than sinless. If we kept his commandments absolutely we would need no “advocate,” no “propitiation” for we would be sinless on our own! We must be “willing to do his will” (Jn. 7:17), and we must do as much of it as we know and honestly understand. And, when we find ourselves coming short even as the apostle Paul did (Rom. 7:7-25), we must deeply regret our failure, confess it, ask for forgiveness, and make every effort possible not to fail again! That is keeping Christ’s commandments! That, coupled with faith in Christ’s promises, will procure his “advocacy” and our “justification.” Jesus gave objective demonstrations that he stands as “advocate” for people who did exactly as we have stated above—the man let down through the roof, Simon Peter, Lazarus, the weeping woman in Simon’s house (Lk. 7), the thief on the cross, et.al.

“Perfected” love is “completed” love. The Greek word here is *teteleiotai*—a perfect-tense verb, meaning, “Reached and continuing to reach its goal or intended end.” In other words, “But whoever goes on keeping his word (Greek *teron*, present tens verb, “continuing to keep”), truly in that one the love of God reaches its intended end or aim.” The love of God toward man reaches the completeness of its purpose when an individual habitually keeps God’s word. To bring all human beings to keeping his commandments was the purpose for which “God so loved the world that he gave his only unique Son.” Now, do we see the extreme significance of the word (i.e., “commandments”), and of keeping it? Our feelings are not all that important! God loved us not to give us “good vibes,” but to bring us to obedience to his word—that was the goal and aim of God’s love. Preaching so that people will keep God’s commandments is to love like God loves! Preaching that denigrates keeping his commandments is certainly not love. Like Jesus said, “Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches men so, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19). All the “religious feelings, religious hype, and religious institutions” are meaningless unless the “obedience of faith” is produced in the individual heart of a human being! The pagans (Greeks and Romans—Gnostics) contemporary with John sought to find God through an emotional experience. They re-enacted the myths of martyred pagan gods in public services in such a way that the worshiper identified himself emotionally with the suffering god. Special lighting effects, sensual music and drama were used to bring about this emotional “experience.” Once the desired emotion was produced, the worshiper believed that he shared the victory and immortality of his slain deity. This is certainly relevant to 21st century Christianity as practiced by thousands of people with all the hype and entertainment and music used by “preachers” (TV and otherwise) to produce a so-called “Christian-experience.” But such a pseudo-experience never produces any enduring change in the moral and ethical life of the individual. The “Christian-experience” which proves salvation, is obedience (see also James 2:14-26, etc.). Obedience is proof that God’s love has found its purpose, result, and completion in an individual. “By this we may be sure that we are in him; he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he (Jesus) walked” (1 Jn. 2:6). It is by the experience of obedience that we know we know him. And thereby, we know we have life eternal—for eternal life is to know him (see 2 Jn. 6; 1 Jn. 5:3). And no one can know him, or know how he walked, in order to obey him, unless he knows the word! You don’t find his will or his walk in conscience, or emotions, or thoughts, but in his revelation (word).

Yes! John is writing both an old and a new commandment! The commandment which is both old and new is love. It is as old as life itself—as old as the law of Moses (Lev. 19:17-18). It is in the Bible as early as Genesis and as late as Revelation. It is that upon which hangs all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:34-40). In the preceding verses John has said that the purpose of divine love is reached when men obey God’s commandments. Now, he will spell it out—the commandment which is both old and new is that we love. The Greek word *kainos* is used here for “new.” It means “new in reference to quality.” There is another Greek word (*neos*) which means “new in reference to time.” So, what John is talking about here is that love as a way of life is revolutionary! It is new in Jesus and in those who walk as

he walked because it was never practiced with such quality before! The Jews, who had love as a commandment, practiced it only to their own race, and even a limited few of their own circle within their own race! The Christian whose life is controlled by love (2 Cor. 5:14) knows “no man after the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16), but loves all mankind! The Christian lets God define in his word what true love is. It is the light of God in Christ at Calvary and the empty tomb that made divine love known in all its “perfection” (goal, end, purpose). That shows love as the essential commandment of life. Whoever loves like that walks in the light as Christ walked in the light of God’s love—by keeping God’s commandments (see John 15:7-11; 13:34-35; 8:29; 14:21-24 and 1 Jn. 5:3).

Can “words” abide in people? Indeed, they can—indeed, they do! When your parents die and their bodies are buried in the ground, all that is left of them to abide in you are their “words”—which was manifested in their deeds (good, bad or indifferent)! Christ’s word is capable of “abiding” (living) in you (Jn. 15:7). It may be “eaten” (John 6:35-63; it may be “sown” or “planted” in you (Lk. 8:11-15; 1 Pet. 1:23-25); it may be “stored” in your heart (Psa. 119:11); it may “find a place in you” (John 8:37); what you “heard” of God’s word can “abide” in you (1 Jn. 2:24); it may “dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16); it can be “ingrafted” or “implanted” in you (James 1:21)—on and on we could go with references indicating that “words,” especially the “words” of God and Christ are intended to “abide, dwell” in you or be ingested, assimilated, fed to you (Jer. 15:16; Job 23:12; Psa. 119:103; Ezek. 2:8; 3:1; Rev. 10:9-10); and it may be “at work in believers (2 Thess. 2:13). We are even told a believer “has the testimony in himself” (1 Jn. 5:10). Again, it is clear that the Christian’s primary, unequivocal and singularly important experience is to be that of putting God’s revealed word, the Bible, into his mind, heart and soul! Prayer is important, singing is nice, giving is essential, evangelism is pressing—but none so pressing as Christ’s “words” abiding in you. If you don’t read it or study it you won’t know what his words are—and if you don’t know what they are you can’t do them—and if you can’t do them they will never “abide” in you!

There are three words used for “love” in the Greek New Testament. There is eros meaning the giving of self for the sake of what one gets in return (a selfish love). There is phileo, the giving of self to that which is attractive or that which one “likes.” And there is agape, a love of the will, a love of decision, regardless of the consequences, regardless of what it may or may not get in return, and regardless of whether it is personally attractive or “likeable.” IT IS GOD-LIKE LOVE! Agape love is the only one of the three that can be commanded (indeed is the only one that, in the Bible is commanded). All other “loves” must be controlled by the direction of agape-love. Man must love. He is made in the image of god. He cannot be loveless. But WHAT man loves is of supreme importance, because that will decide what his character will be (see Hosea 9:10)! The things of the world are not in and of themselves sinful (Rom. 14:14; Matt. 15:11; Acts 10:15; 1 Tim. 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:26, etc.). God made everything in his creation “good” (Gen. 1-2). So, John is not condemning the world’s “things,” or pretending that we do not need what God has created. What he means is that we are not to give agape-love to all the desirable things of the world—that is, do not give yourself to these “things” regardless of the consequences. God created these “things” and

he created our “desires” for them—but he intends those things and desires to be controlled by the will and word of God. We are not to devote our whole being to them—not to worship them or serve them. The Greek word *epithumia* translated “lust” would best be translated “desire” since the word “lust” has fallen into bad connotation in our culture. John is talking about a mere desire to gratify the senses and appetites (not just sex, all fleshly appetites). All flesh-appetites are God-given. It is not wrong to have the appetite—but it is wrong to let any appetite be outside the control of God’s will for it (see Rom. Ch. 14 2 Pet. 2:19). Desires of the flesh are right—we could not live without them. But they can get out of control and rule over us and enslave us (2 Pet. 2:17-22). The desire of the “eyes” has to do with what the world calls “culture, enlightenment, taste, sophistication, urbanity, class, experience, polish or in-the-know.” Now we all need a certain amount of “class” or “polish.” If we didn’t have some, we’d dress like slobs, eat like hogs, drive like maniacs, talk like idiots, and be about as graceful as goony-birds on Guam! But we must not give our whole life to “culture.” There are more important things than knowing what the fourth fork is for or how to recognize the latest rock-star. The desire for the “vain-glory” of life is from the Greek word *aladzoneia*, literally meaning “a purposeless wanderer or imposter, braggart or boaster, one who pretends to be that which he is not”! There are those whose whole lives consist in bragging and boasting. They always have the “best” car, house, TV, wife, kids, or job. And when they change, what they have changed to is the “best”—better than yours. It is an insatiable craving for status! Christians must have a more meaningful life than that! They must focus on eternal, God-like values because we are what we love!

There is no single anti-Christ! (See 2 John v. 7). John’s writing here has to be understood in the light of the theology of Judaism and Gnosticism of his day! The Jews divided all time into two ages. The age, which preceded the coming of the Messiah, and the “last time” or “day of the Lord” (i.e., the Christian age) which would usher in the age of the Messiah. That is precisely what the OT prophets preached. Thus the reason the presence of the anti-Christ(s) (plural) proves it is the “last hour” is that the anti-Christ(s) are against Christ. Had Christ not come, they could not oppose him. Their presence is proof Christ (Messiah) has come, and therefore, proof that it is the “last days” spoken of by the prophets! You see, the fact that Jesus Christ, Messiah, had come in the flesh, was denied by the Gnostics (and the Jews). They refused to accept the revelation of God that God could become flesh and dwell among men. The Gnostics made Christianity a philosophy, a religion, because matter was evil and if you kept your mind righteous, you could do as you pleased with your body. Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh is anti-Christ! That, my friend, covers a lot of the modern religious world today! Liberal Protestantism, Mormonism, Christian Science, All Islamic religions, Eastern religions, Judaism, and every one of the thousands of cults on earth! “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine (Jesus as God-Incarnate) do not receive him into the house (church) or give him any greeting, for he who greets him shares his wicked work” (2 John 10-11).

There is no deep, mystical, dark, esoteric secret as to how a person “abides” in Christ! It is as clear as human language can make it! 1 Jn. 2:24 says, “Let what you heard

from the beginning abide in you (the apostolic gospel and doctrine). If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father.” Now, read these verses—1 John 2:5-6; 3:24; 4:15; John 15:7-11, and, since having Christ come and make his abode with us is the same as our abiding in Christ, read these verses—John 14:15,21,23; 1 John 4:13,16; 5:10-12. “Abiding” is usually associated with length of time. But it has meaning far richer than simply a relation to time. It is a word of quality-involvement. Think of “abiding” at home with mother and father! Think of “abiding” as in a marriage relationship. Think of “abiding” as living in America all your life rather than in Afghanistan! That is what John says may be our relationship with the Lord if we “are at home with his word—or his word is at home in us!” Jesus Christ, through his word, becomes our security, our satisfaction, our “food,” our “clothing,” our “citizenship,” our mother and father (guidance), our “companion,” our “lover,” our “occupation,” our “consolation.” His word is where we are! His word is where we live! People identify us as “belonging” to him and his word—it is our “home,” our “family,” our “lineage,” our “ancestry,” we are “born of it and live in it!”

The Greek word translated “anointing” is *chrisma* (related to *Christos* or Christ, literally meaning, “to rub”) and has no relationship to the Greek word *charisma*, meaning, “gift, grace.” Therefore, the “anointing” definitely has nothing to do with the *charismata* (spiritual gifts”) of 1 Cor. Chs. 12-14. In context, *chrisma* seems to be the antithesis of the anti-Christians and their teachings. The Gnostics taught that only the “enlightened” (anointed) ones who knew the esoteric, mysterious teachings of Gnosticism in their cult knew what God was all about. And of course, the Gnostic “anointed” (the “in-group”) rejected the incarnation of God and taught that all matter was evil. John is telling the Christians that they (Christians) have received the true anointing because they believe Christ was God in the flesh, and that matter is good and holy if it is used according to the will of Christ. Verse 20 should read, “And you all have an anointing from the Holy One and you all know it.” Notice that the Christian “anointing is associated with: (a) the truth, 2:20; (b) what you heard from the beginning, 2:24; (c) his anointing teaches you about everything, 2:27. Christians who believe what the writings of the apostles and the NT teach have had “rubbed on” them (been anointed with) all the indoctrination they need. They have everything there is essential to “know” God. God can’t be known any better than through Christ’s word! Paul’s great letter to the Colossians tells us the same thing! “In Christ all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell” Col. 1:9. Paul became a minister (preacher, teacher) “to make the word of God fully known” Col. 1:25—“the mystery hidden for ages and generations.” In Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” Col. 2:3. In Christ “the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him” Col. 2:9. Brethren, we do not need any “New Age” religion. We do not need any Hindu guru or Islamic “mullah” or Roman Catholic priest to “enlighten” us. We do not need any “second work of grace” no “higher experience”, no “second Pentecostal outpouring” to make us “know” God. If what Christians heard from the beginning—if what Christians were “taught” by the apostles in the first century provided all the “anointing” they needed to have eternal life, then nothing else is needed but apostolic doctrine. John makes no reference whatever to charismatic, supernatural manifestations or gifts or experiences in his epistle, and yet he says Christians have all the “anointing” they need! We need no teaching but that which is of the apostles (1 Jn. 2:27; 4:1-6). We can be

sure because that is why John wrote this epistle (1 John 5:13).

The outward test of righteous behavior corresponds to our inward attitude toward righteousness and sin. The outward test of loving behavior toward our brothers corresponds to our inward attitude of love for them. Our open confession of Jesus as the Christ corresponds to our inward faith in him. John is again giving the antithesis to the Gnostic doctrine which said your outward behavior does not have to correspond with your attitudes! Gnostics said one could be inwardly righteous but did not have to be outwardly moral. Quite a switch from the Pharisees who thought outward behavior justified inward rebellion! The Gnostics claimed to have special enlightenment from God. They claimed to have been begotten of God. According to them all spirit was good, all matter was evil. Since God is Spirit, and could not be matter, those born of him need not use their material bodies according to any standard of "righteousness" so long as their thoughts were "righteous." John's whole point rests on the fact of the incarnation. God himself, in Jesus Christ, came to earth in a physical body and proved that the Gnostic doctrine is false! Therefore (and John's argument is based on empirical evidence, 1:1-4, not on philosophical speculation) those "born of God" behave as Jesus did with his body! You see how important it is we have the facts of the gospel upon which to base our belief (faith)?! While it is by grace that we are born of him, our works of faith give us access into that grace (Rom. 5:2).

**TEACHER'S NOTES 1 JOHN 3:1-24**

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

Clinton Gill says, "One of the weakest areas of understanding in the minds of most modern Christians about eternal life is the failure to realize that it is a present reality." Evidently, it was an area of weakness in first century Christianity, too. It was one of the aberrations of Gnosticism that the reality of eternal life could not be appreciated while man's soul was a "prisoner of this evil body." John is emphatic! We are sons of God from the moment of our belief and covenant obedience! We do not have to live our lives here in uncertainty or confusion about whose we are or what our destination is! It is like human marriage—marriage is intended to remove all uncertainty as to whose we are, and what our ultimate purpose or goal is in this life! You hardly ever hear anyone saying, "I think I'm married, or I guess I'm married," or, "Now that I'm married, I don't know what to do about it." One of the surest ways to know you are a child of God is whether worldly people fraternize with you or not! The reason the world does not "know" you is because you are a child of God, 3:1. J. B. Phillips paraphrases, "Consider the incredible love that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called 'children of God'—and that is not just what we are called, but what we are, Oh, dear children of mine, have you realized it? Here and now we are God's children." We possess in these bodies of dust the very same imperishable, unconquerable, constant existence (life) that was in Jesus Christ which goes, at the moment of exodus from this life, to be with him in Paradise."

The certainty of our eternal life is what provides the motive for conducting our life here in purity (see also 1 Cor. 15:1-58; 2 Cor. 5:1-21). It is not the quality of our eternal life that motivates us, because we do not know what we shall be (3:2). As Paul says, our future existence will be an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:16-18) and since all that is "unseen," there are no human words capable of communicating its fulness to us! So we are not to dwell on the quality of it, but the certainty of it. And that certainty is from evidence, not feelings! That is why John begins this epistle with, "That which we have seen and heard, and handled, concerning the word of life..." It is a matter of evidence. Producing purity of Christian behavior is a matter of preaching and teaching, persuading and convincing people with the evidence of Jesus' resurrection (in other words, the Gospel). Peter approached purity of life from the same perspective (see 2 Pet. Ch. 3). Peter reminds his readers of the fact of the Flood which scoffers deliberately ignore. Then he says, "Do not ignore the fact that God is not slow about his promises" to destroy the world again with fire! And "since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness hastening the coming of the day of God." It was the "power of his (Christ's) resurrection" that gave Paul his motive for renouncing his former life of Pharisaic sin and selfishness. It is not regimentation that checks the indulgence of the flesh, but the certain knowledge of our being "raised with Christ (Col. 2:8—3:11). J. B. Phillips: "We don't know what we shall become in the future. We only know that, if reality were to break through, we should reflect his likeness, for we should see him as he really is! Everyone who has at heart a hope like that keeps himself pure, for he knows how pure Christ is." John had seen the

risen Christ, even the glorified Christ (in his highly symbolic vision recorded in Revelation, ch. 1), but he could not tell what the glorified Christ was like. There just were no human words sufficient to do anything but symbolize! It was enough to know that Christ was real, was alive, was sovereign, was eternal, and was glorified (having previously become mortal as we are). What John sees of human existence beyond this life in the book of Revelation and the words he uses to communicate it to us is as close as we shall ever get in this life to understanding it—and is as close as we need to be presently. Since our eternal life begins here and now—since we are now becoming what we shall be—and since we shall dwell forever in the presence of the self-less, pure, loving Son of God, selflessness, purity and love should be our constant goal here and now. The real secret to attainment, to accomplishment, to success in any human ambition is motivation. Every human being capable of thinking has the capacity to “do right.” Humans fail to attain because they are not motivated. We are not responsible for one another’s capabilities—but we are for one another’s motivations! The certainties of the Gospel are the ultimate motives for Christians.

John says “sin is lawlessness.” Sin has its origin in rebellion. The essence of sin is, “I don’t have to—I will not—You can’t make me.” John might well have said, “sin is anarchy,” or “sin is chaos.” Sin is the attitude, “I will do as I please! That is the very substance of sin. It is self-centeredness, lovelessness, carelessness. Paul wrote Timothy, “Now we know that the law is good, if anyone uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just, but for the lawless and disobedient...” (1 Tim. 1:8-11). In other words, lawful people are law-abiding by some motive higher than mere law itself! They keep the law because they are lawful at heart. Something has removed rebellion, self-centeredness, and anarchy from their nature! The cure for sin is not force or law—and certainly not license! The cure for sin has to do with motivation. That is precisely what John is revealing in this context. If sin arises in the spirit of a human being (in his attitudes), then it is the spirit that must be treated (changed). The Gnostics said that the “spiritual elite” never sinned in the spirit (those in the “know”) and thus were not sinners. For the Gnostic it was impossible for the “knowledgeable” to sin (because indulging the flesh was not sin since the flesh was evil anyway). John is saying that it is a sinful attitude (lawlessness) that is the essence of sin and such an attitude leads to doing wrong with the body—the fulfillment of sin. The motive for renouncing rebellion, for renouncing self-centeredness, and lawlessness is the certainty that we are sons of God—NOW!

Did you sin yesterday? Most of us would admit that we did—especially when we consider the attitude of lawlessness as being sin (“I don’t have to—I will not—You can’t make me—I’ll do as I please”). Perhaps the arrogance that says, “I did not sin yesterday, and don’t know that I ever have,” is the worst sin of all! Anyone who says that makes God a liar and himself a liar, because God says we do sin, even believers in Christ sin (e.g. Peter, even after the resurrection of Christ in Gal. 2; Paul’s admission in Romans 7). Yet these two men (heroes of the faith) believed themselves to be “abiding in Christ.” There are many such heroes of faith in the Gospels and Acts and Epistles (consider that Paul calls the Corinthian church, “The church of God...those sanctified in Jesus Christ, called to be saints together

with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...”). The church at Corinth was not exactly perfect!!! If we consciously sin tomorrow or this afternoon, we will still be abiding in Christ IF we consciously repent of that sin. A person repenting will be sorry he sinned, determine that he is going to make right any wrong he may have done (if it is feasibly possible to make it right), and determine that he will not repeat that sin. Such a person does not have a lawless attitude. Such a person is essentially lawful—he loves God’s law—and wills to do it!

Christ came for the express purpose to destroy the works of the devil. J. B. Phillips puts this verse, “The man who lives a consistently good life is a good man, as surely as God is good. But the man whose life is habitually sinful is spiritually a son of the devil, for the devil is behind all sin, as he has always been. Now the Son of God came to earth with the express purpose of liquidating the devil’s activities...” The Son of God came to earth to change minds from lawlessness to lawfulness! Eventually, the Son of God will change these fleshly carnal, demanding, vulnerable, antagonistic-to-the-spiritual bodies, but he has not done so yet. And while as Christians, our minds are changed, our bodies still “wage war against the spirit” (see Rom. 7:13ff; Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 8:7ff; Matt. 26:41; 1 Pet. 2:11). Our fleshly bodies, while created good by God, and not sinful in themselves, are extremely vulnerable to the evil ideas of the devil. That is what Jesus meant by, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Even Jesus experienced the vulnerability of the flesh. But he did not yield his flesh to the temptations of the devil—even though it cost him his physical life. The Son of God came to earth to destroy the activity of the devil at its source—the mentality of lawlessness. To the extent that believers surrender their lawlessness to Christ (motivated by his love and their son-ship), to that extent the body is kept from sinning. And any time the body yields to sin it is because the mind has yielded first. One cannot say (as the Gnostics did) that since the flesh is carnal, what it does is not wrong so long as the mind is spiritual. What the body does, reveals to us what the mind is thinking!

Yes! We are still on the same subject! John takes great pains to make this clear because of the Gnostic heresy—which is as prevalent in 21st century Christianity as it was then! John does not say that it is impossible for one born of God, a son of God, a Christian, to sin. That would be a contradiction of what he said in 1:8ff and of the rest of the NT. The point of these verses (3:4-10) is that anyone who says righteousness consists of anything less than righteous actions, is deceitful! The dichotomy of separating spirituality into strictly a mental state leaving the body to be used lawlessly is false! The Greek verbs *menon* (“abiding”), *hamartanon* (“sinning”), *poion* (“doing”) give us a hint as to how John should be interpreted here. John uses present tense verbs (continuous action verbs) to say that one who is a child of God cannot have sin as a habit of his life—one born of God does not “go on continually sinning.” That is, sin cannot be a way of life, a manner of life, for a son of God! Anyone whose life is characterized by habitual sin, who regularly disregards the will and authority of God in his life, has neither seen nor known Jesus. The Gnostics claimed they were the ones who really “knew” Jesus and his character and his will. John had seen and known Jesus and his character and his will. John had seen and known Jesus, personally,

experientially, empirically (1:1-4). And John was warning that what the Gnostics said was a lie! They did not know Jesus if they said one could habitually use the body lawlessly and then say they had no sin. Ray Stedman says about this verse: "...a Christian cannot persist in habitual, continual sin, because he is born of God...he cannot sin without a struggle or a sense of grief so powerful that ultimately he will be brought to repentance and a forsaking of sin. What he (John) is declaring to us, then, is that sin is no longer natural to the believer. Though for a time he may slip into it rather easily, nevertheless it is now contrary to his nature. His heart is set toward God, and his life is a truce-less antagonism against sin." The Christian life is a constant struggle. It is lived in constant tension between flesh and spirit! God has given us his Spirit for that very purpose (Gal. 5:16-17). The Spirit of God in the born again person is to make war on the flesh and to prevent him from doing what he (the human) would. A Christian can, and often does, commit single acts of sin—even repeatedly, for awhile; but he cannot go on, cannot habitually, persistently, contentedly, go on doing sinful actions or thoughts. A Christian is not content when he is sinning—he is not where he wants to be (Rom. 7:13ff). The inability to persist in sin is primary proof of the new life in Christ. If a person claims to be a Christian, but is not turning from sin—if that person is going on week after week, year after year, in a condition he/she knows is wrong, then such a person is not abiding in Christ, nor is Christ abiding in him/her. When there is no more struggle, no more tension against sin, there is no more "seed of God" there. "No one who goes on sinning has either seen him or known him (1 Jn. 3:6). The tension is right—continual sin isn't.

Yes! Those of a worldly mind-set, those who do not abide in Christ nor have Christ abiding in them, really do hate those with a Christ-mind-set! Clinton Gill says, "There is nothing so violent (see Lk. 16:16) as the inter-reaction which takes place when righteousness and sin meet. When the righteousness of God meets the sin of man, the result is called the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18ff). When righteousness in men meets unrighteousness in men, the result is murder. The first demonstration of this truth is in the murder of Abel by Cain. John says it explicitly, 'And for what reason did he slay him? Because his works were evil and the ones of his brother righteous.'" It regularly surprises Christian people that non-Christians will hate them because of their righteousness! But John tells us that we should not be surprised at that. It was Christ's love and righteousness that brought about his crucifixion. Peter discusses this issue in 1 Pet. 4:1-19. Peter says that the worldly-minded and reprobate "are surprised that you (Christians) do not join them in the same old profligacy, and they abuse you." Peter says Christians should not be surprised that the world hates righteousness. He also says that such is a clear sign that the Spirit of God rests upon Christians. Isn't that interesting! The sign that the Spirit of God is upon a person is not "other tongues" or "prophecy," but that a person is being persecuted for righteousness sake (Matt. 5:10-12). Love (as defined by the Bible) is proof of eternal life. Hatred (as defined by the Bible) is proof of eternal death!

John's statement, "by this..." is a mental signal pointing the reader back to all he has said thus far in chapters 1 through 3. "By this...." means, that through confessing our sins, walking in the light, loving one another, we shall know that we are of the truth, and

reassure our hearts before God even when our hearts condemn us! There will be times when guilt for past sins will overwhelm one's conscience—times when others will accuse us of having wrong motives (and we may even begin to doubt our own motives)—times when our imperfection and immaturity, compared with that we see in others, will make us want to doubt our relationship to God. Clinton Gill writes, “Any honest person can think of a million reasons why God should not claim him as his child. This fearful and negative evaluation of self by one who actually does strive to obey God, to face his own guilt, to love his brothers, and to hold fast his faith in Jesus Christ, is totally unnecessary. No child of God has any right to a guilt complex—even if our heart knows something real and terrible against us, God is greater than our hearts.. God knows both the deed and the reason. He does not make excuses for our guilt, and neither should we. But he does make propitiation for our guilt in the blood of Christ, and we...accept it. No matter how terrible the sin nor how far reaching the hurt, when it is given over to God to be washed away by the blood of Calvary, we have no right to hold it any longer as our own...” If we are willing to lay down our lives for one another, we are of God! If we are willing to lay down our desires and ambitions, our time, our talents, our all, for Christ and one another, we are of God! We are dealing here with a “gut issue”! Trying to find assurance that one is really “born again”—that one is really a child of God—that one is really saved and has eternal life is a staggering experience! It may result in despair and despondency or in joyous confidence. It all depends on where we place our trust for such assurance! And the assurance we want can be based on facts, not fancy—on our actions and God's word, not on feelings or theories. If we actually have committed our lives to doing what is right and actually do love people by what we do (giving to their physical needs and giving to their spiritual needs—giving of self to others) then we know we are children of God. If we know we are doing right then we know that God loves us no matter how we may feel! God is greater than our heart and he loves us even when our heart condemns us. This is the blessedness of trusting in the grace of God. It is the greatest blessing of the Christian life. The incidence of suicide among church members is evidence of how desperately we need to persuade one another to a realization of the mercy and compassion of God toward human guilt. At the same time, we must not deceive ourselves! The mercy of God and the cleansing of our guilt are to be had only in the confession of our guilt (1:8-9). The atonement of Christ is sufficient to cleanse us from sin and actually to take away the consciousness of it (Heb. 10:1-8). Let's preach this and teach this as much as possible today!

In this context, there are only two commandments for us to keep: (a) believe in the name of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and; (2) love one another. If we keep these two commandments, we abide in him and he abides in us! The Greek word *tereo*, translated, “keep” is used to denote a “prison” in Acts 4:3—a place for guarding—for safe keeping—a place of retention. What Christ wants us to do with faith and love is to “retain” them in our lives—never let them escape! Faith and love should “dwell” in us so that they take up permanent residence (like a prisoner). Faith, love, obedience, doing what is right—this is the Spirit of God and Christ. If this is the nature of our mentality and the nature of our action, then we know we have the Spirit of God in us. And if we know that, then we know we are children of God and are of the truth, and may reassure our hearts before him! Actually, all

the “commandments” (law) of God are summed up in these two—on them hang all the law and the prophets! But be careful! God reserves the sovereignty to define what faith, love, obedience and doing right is! None of these character traits are self-defining. Finite men have neither the wisdom nor the power to define them. Therefore, if there be a Book or communication with the authority of God undeniably stamped upon it (evidenced beyond a reasonable doubt), i.e., the Bible, men are to get their definitions there!

**TEACHER'S NOTES 1 JOHN 4:1-21**

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

John is clearly using the word “spirit(s)” (Greek pneumatī) as synonymous with “prophet(s) and “false prophet(s). Of course, he does not mean only “prophets” with actual supernatural power of divine inspiration—he means pseudo-prophets. John means by “spirit(s)” all religious teachers, no matter what they claim—no matter who they are! John uses the imperative mood with the Greek word pisteuete (“believe”), so that it should be translated, “Beloved, stop (imperative mood is a command) believing every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are of God or not, because many false prophets (Greek actually uses the word pseudoprophetai) have gone out into the world.” Christian love ought never to take the form of gullibility or credulity! The child of God is never to be tolerant to the point of accepting every religious (or other) teaching without making sure it conforms to the apostolic word (the Bible)! There were and ARE false teachers and preachers (and will be until Christ comes again)! Every teacher’s teaching must be compared with the word of God (using accepted hermeneutical principles) before it is to be believed! John will make clear in this chapter (4:1-6) that all religious learning must ultimately come from listening to the apostles! All who “know” God, listen to the apostles—all who do not listen to the apostles are not of God! It is just that simple and exclusive! There are many false “spirits” in our present religious world! Many of them much like the Gnostics with their esoteric, “special,” in-the-know brands of anti-established-church Christianity—AVOID THEM!

The word “confess” in Greek is homologeo. It is a compound word from homo which means, “same as,” and logeo which means, “speak, reason, think, say, profess.” So what John is saying here is that every “spirit” (i.e., teacher) who says the same (or, thinks the same, or reasons the same) as the apostles about Jesus Christ—that he did, in fact, come to earth as the incarnation of Almighty God—IS OF GOD! John makes it plain that this is the way we know the Spirit of God is in the “spirit (i.e., teacher) doing the teaching. Contained in this “confession” (statement of apostolic doctrine) is everything that makes the Christian faith unique! People can take the NT and make an ethical system of it—they can take it and make a “religion” of it (making Christianity just one of the so-called “great religions of the world”—Thomas Jefferson did). But apostolic doctrine insists that the very core of all truth is that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh upon the earth some 2000 years ago! HE WAS BOTH DEITY AND HUMANITY! The ultimate test of a true “spirit” (teacher) is not spiritual activity (manifestations of ethical behavior, religiosity, even alleged miraculous doings), but in “confessing” (submission to the Lordship) that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was and is Almighty God, Sovereign Lord of everything, Co-Creator of all that is, Lord of heaven and earth, vicarious Lamb for atonement of the sins of mankind. And Jesus Christ holds this Lordship alone! He is to have no equals! Anyone who opposes this is of “anti-Christ”! We can accept one another if we err in some aspects of Biblical teaching—but not if we err in this! THIS IS A MUST!!!

John uses three personal pronouns in his text (4:1-6)—“we,” “you,” and, “they.” The “you” refers to John’s audience; the recipients of this letter or “little children” (4:4). The “they” refers to those “of the world,” “anti-Christ,” “false prophets,” those “who do not listen to us” (apostles). The “we” (or, “us”) refers primarily to the apostles because they were the original teachers (the inspired teachers) of the doctrine of the incarnation—and perhaps secondarily, to faithful Christian evangelists and teachers (Eph. 4:11-16) who were true teachers of the apostolic doctrine (like Timothy, Titus, et.al.). Those who would “know” God as their Lord and Savior, must ultimately listen (Greek, akouei, “hear, heed, obey, follow”) to the apostles (as they interpreted the O.T. and Christ’s revelations to them)! They, and they alone, were promised divine inspiration. When they died, that promise died with them, for they left the world sufficient communication for it to be saved (John 20:30-31; Jude 3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-11, etc.). Nothing beyond what the Biblical writers have written is needed for anyone to “know” God as fully as is possible in this life! If any person will “hear” (heed and obey) the words of the apostles, that person may be sure he “knows” God; that God “knows him, and that he is a child of God, born again, sanctified, and possessor of eternal life now! No alleged “latter-day revelations,” no “new, Pentecostal outpourings,” no “second works of grace,” no “extra-Biblical experiences,” no “visions, no “feelings,” no “new, anti-established-church groups” are needed. In the apostolic word we have been granted all that pertains to life and godliness that is necessary to escape the corruption of the world and to be made partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:3-11)—WHO NEEDS ANYTHING ELSE?!!

YES! The doctrine to which we listen is the fundamental criterion for “knowing” the difference between truth and error! And those to whom this doctrine was given—and who preached it and wrote it—have given evidence that their doctrine is the ultimate touchstone of truth and error! It renounces this world and predicts it is passing away (1 John 2:15-17, 2 Pet. 3:8-13; 2 Cor. 4:16-18, etc.). To whom else shall we listen? Shall we listen to those who teach the doctrines of Mohammed? Of Buddha? Of Joseph Smith? Of Aristotle, Plato? Of Krishna Venta? Of John Dewey, Jean Paul Sartre? Joseph Fletcher? Shirley McLaine? Do not forget that John says here, too, that “They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them.” Some religious teachers today spout glibly their “profession” of the deity of Jesus, but their teaching and their behavior is “of the world”! (Read 2 Peter ch. 2 for another “check-list” for false teachers). Religious teachers today in many instances are professing “spirituality” and have “hearts trained in greed” (2 Pet. 2:14). Some profess the Lordship of Christ and then deny that the apostolic word alone is sufficient—claiming miraculous powers and positions equal to Christ himself! (Oral Roberts, claiming to raise the dead and that he will come back with Christ as an equal sovereign). It is time for the people of God to forget “tolerance” in the matter of doctrine! Christ has authorized only the apostles to communicate to mankind the truth of redemption and eternal life! All who teach what goes “beyond” apostolic communication are not to be “tolerated” in the church (see 2 John 6-11).

Loving is the only experience into which man can enter totally on the same level that God enters into it! Man can know and experience and do love to the same extent that

God through his Son loved—i.e., lay down his life for another! The person who does not love does not know God because no other experience which is possible to man is identical to anything else God does. God knows, of course, and man knows—but God knows so much more than man. God thinks, and man thinks, but God’s thoughts are so much higher than man’s thoughts (e.g., Eden and the “tree of knowledge”). God wills and man wills, but God has a sovereign will and man does not. When man tries to exert his will as sovereign, it become sin, lawlessness—God demands that we do his will. But love—that’s a different “ball game.” God has made it possible for human beings to love to the same extent that he loves. Jesus came to earth as a human being to demonstrate that it is possible—Jesus even demanded of his disciples that they love as he loved! GOD IS LOVE! God is love’s source, origin, “Father,” ultimate expression. Those who love like God are of God. They can’t be of anyone else! In giving ourselves so that others may live, we may come to “know” what it is like to be God (which Adam and Eve tried on another plane) without harming ourselves in the process. Our loving proves that we are his children. It is not our love which produces kinship to God—it is kinship to God which produces love in us. When the “seed” (word) of his Spirit is planted in our minds, it grows (by cultivation) and produces his love (his nature)!

It is very interesting that John uses the perfect tense of the Greek verb for “perfect” which is teteleiomene! It means that if we love one another then God’s love “has reached and will continue to reach its desired goal or end in us.” This is the very reason God so loved us and gave us his Son, so that he could make loving children out of us. That means that everything God has done from Eden until the end of time (think about this!) is only to make us be loving people! It means that the essence of our salvation is that we be made into people who love like Jesus loved! It means that the essence of righteousness is agape-love! All apostolic doctrine is to re-create us into being God-like-lovers. The purpose for the existence of the church on earth today is to slowly, gradually, sometimes painstakingly (with discipline), make us into loving beings, “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29). God had no other purpose for Israel, for the Messiah, for the New Testament, for the church, than to bring his divine love to its completion in us! THAT IS HIS GOAL IN ALL OF THIS—NOT TO MAKE US MIRACLE WORKERS, NOT TO MAKE US FAMOUS, NOT TO MAKE US RICH WITH THIS WORLD’S VANITIES, NOT TO GIVE US SUPERNATURAL POWER OVER PHYSICAL THINGS, NOT GO GIVE US A WAY TO EARN OUR STANDING BEFORE HIM—BUT TO MAKE US LOVE LIKE HE LOVES! And his love is his goal for us because in it we “know” him! It is the only way to know him! When you are loving someone, you are experiencing God! It can’t be done by any other “experience”!

The truth of the incarnation and love as the exclusive experience of it are joined here by John as the ultimate test by which we know God has given us his Spirit! It is our belief of God’s incarnation in his only unique (Greek, monogenes) Son that is the origin of our agape-love and is what proves to us that God has given us his Spirit. In other words, we know we have his Spirit by faith and obedience (faith born of love and obedience born of love). Do you see what this eliminates as a test of having the Spirit of God? It eliminates so much of what the modern religious world thinks is proof of having the Spirit of God—i.e., “feelings,” miracles, success, self-righteousness, religious fame, etc., etc. Now remember, this love which we have does not originate in us. It has no basis in our own selves (except

the capacity). We cannot call it forth without some deed, some manifestation of the Divine love first shown to us. And John is quick to add that such a manifestation of God's love to us is objective, not subjective. God showed his love to us and it was "seen" by the apostles and they have "testified" of it to us! Do you see where that leaves much of the modern religious world in the matter of what the basis for Christian love is? It leaves it without a basis at all! Historical, objective evidence of God's love must be the base from which we attempt to bring people to being "born of God"!!!

Whoever dwells in the love of God, dwells in God. To dwell in something is to live in it. It becomes a "way of life." In this case, the love which God shows becomes the believer's way of life—the believer does the loving thing that God does! And where do we find the loving way God would live if he lived in our human frame and circumstances? We look at what Jesus did and what Jesus commanded! When a person dwells (lives, acts out, does) in God-like love, he is fulfilling God's goal for himself. He is keeping God's commandments—the goal of God's love (1 Jn. 2:5; 4:12). God's love is perfected in us (reaches its goal) when we anticipate the judgment with confidence (see Heb. 10-19-25). The love of God (self-sacrificing love) reaches its goal in us when we sacrifice our lives for others (just as God in the flesh, Jesus, did). When we do that, we are keeping all of God's commandments, for such love fulfills the law of God (Rom. 13:8,10). We are not sinless, of course, for one of his commandments is that we are not sinless and we must admit it. But self-sacrificing love renounces self-righteousness and throws itself upon the mercy of Christ. That is why we can have confidence at the judgment. We may have confidence knowing our lives are motivated by the same self-sacrificing love of Christ and that our lives are being lived out in the same deeds of humble service to others. If that is so, then Christ lives in us and we live in him. He will not condemn himself or contradict himself! If we are "crucified" and "Christ lives in us" (Gal. 2:20), then it is no longer we who live but Christ living in us. This is probably one of the deepest probing statements in the Bible—this question having to do with confidence at the judgment! ALL human beings must ultimately stand before the absolutely Sovereign Creator! None will escape this scrutiny—not even Christians. And how will we stand? What do we think about it now? Do we try not to think about it? Do we joke about it? Do we grasp for "straws" of false doctrines to deny it—or the straws of "self-good-works." Everyone thinks about it! Conscience demands that everyone think about it! God's goal-reaching-love (perfecting of love) in keeping Christ's commandments, living out his life in our lives, casts out fear of judgment. Whoever fears has not sacrificed self for others. Many people say they love mankind. Some undoubtedly actually have an inner love for God and man. But love brought to the goal for which God himself loved the world is love that is performed—not just felt or talked about! And no man ever has to be at a loss to decide how to perform the kind of love God has as his goal for men—IT IS WRITTEN IN HUMAN LANGUAGE (THE BIBLE)! And, once again, this confidence at the judgment is all tied into the empirical, historical evidence of God's love in the incarnation. Deny the incarnation and you cannot love as God wants it to reach his goal in you! Our confidence before God has a historical basis—God's love historically demonstrated in the incarnate Son (1 Jn. 4:14,19). The love God wishes as the goal of our lives has a basis in a propositional (word-language) revelation (his commandments)—not in some subjective, humanly-autonomous decision of

the human will!

It is impossible to love God without doing it through loving a fellow human being because: (a) all men are “sons” of God by creation—“love Me, love my children” says God—even human beings insist on that; (b) God loved all men to the ultimate when he gave his Son to die for them. If God so loved (one died for all, 2 Cor. 5:14-21), then we are to see all for whom he died exactly as he sees them—worthy of self-sacrifice; (c) man is the only creature created in God’s image; our use of “things must ultimately be for the benefit of human beings; “things cannot be loved—only people; (d) God is invisible and we live in a visible world. How else shall we “give” to an invisible God except to give to those who have the image of God in them? Jesus said, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me...” Feed a hungry child, you feed a hungry Christ...clothe a shivering, freezing, naked derelict, you feed a shivering Christ...visit an imprisoned person, you visited an imprisoned Christ...care for a lonely, aged, ill, suffering person, you are taking care of Christ and God! Whoever does not love a brother human does not have the power (Greek *dunatai*, “dynamic”) to love God. And what is the “dynamic to love God? It is the fact that God loved us first! See, it is all on the basis of the incarnation, historically accomplished, propositionally revealed. Whoever does not love his brother, does not understand (has not experienced) the historic love of God and has no “dynamic” (power) to love!

**TEACHER'S NOTES 1 JOHN 5:1-21**

prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

John first gives us the objective test by which we may know whether someone else is a child of God, and our brother. “Everyone who believes (and the word “believes” means more than consent—it means believe unto obedience) that Jesus is the Christ (“Messiah”) is begotten (Greek, gegennetai, perfect tense, i.e., “has been and continues to be begotten) of God.” It is imperative for us to know who the children of God are because love of our brothers is essential to our own relationship to God! Everyone loving the one doing the begetting (the parent), loves the child (the one begotten). John is simply saying in a different way what he said in 4:20-21. This is all in the same context. You cannot love God unless you love those begotten of him! The reason for this is that the fundamental commandment of God and his Son, Jesus Christ, is that we love our brethren (see John 13:14; 13:34-35; 15:10; 15:12; 15:17; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:11; 3:32; 2 John 5; Matt. 5:44; Gal. 5:14; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 4:7; 4:11-12, etc., etc.). It is interesting that John uses the Greek word *poiomen*, the present tense (i.e., continuing action) verb translated, “doing.” John wants no confusion about the matter. He means not simply “hear”...nor “keep,” but he means “we are know that we are loving the children of God when we are loving God and doing his commandments...” And this, of course, is “agape-love.” It is the God-like love that cares and does and sacrifices self for others in spite of feelings and circumstances. It is not conditioned upon sentiment, but upon our belief and surrender to God’s will because God’s testimony (in the Bible) about his Son, Jesus Christ, is absolutely true. That testimony is that God has loved us through his Son (God-incarnated) by paying the ransom for our sins in his sacrificial death, and raising him from the dead to give us the sure hope of eternal life at the moment of our entering into covenant with him.. We love because God first loved us. But that very proposition is motivational not upon sentiment but upon undeniable, eye-witnessed, historically-accomplished evidence of that love in Jesus Christ. Without that evidence any sentiment of any kind is void! Without that evidence our “sentiments” would probably focus upon ourselves. Without that evidence we would undoubtedly rebel against any “commandment” to love one another! If you think that is not correct just look at how the unbelieving world “cares” for one another! If they do it at all, it has to be motivated by law and force, or some self-righteous-justification, and done from those motives it really is done with secret rebellion. If you love God and do his commandments, you know you are loving his children from the right motives. You will love his children because that is one of his two fundamental commandments.

That last statement brings us to this question. NO! It is not possible to keep God’s commandments and not love him. Loving God is synonymous with keeping God’s commandments!. There is no other way to really love another person than to do that which is for his/her benefit! REMEMBER, LOVE IS NOT SELF-DEFINING! NOR IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE DEFINED BY HUMAN REASON OR EXPERIENCE! God, alone, has the power, wisdom, majesty and right to define what “love” is! HE HAS DEFINED IT RIGHT HERE IN 1 JOHN 5:3 AS “KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS.” If we love God, we will do that by which

his purpose (as he informs us) is moved forward in all his creation—especially in people! Jesus said it this way: “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love” (John 15:10). Paul said, “Let each of us please his neighbor, for his good, to edify him” (Rom. 15:2). And, of course, it is only in the “commandments” of God and Christ that we find what is really pleasing and good and edifying for our neighbor. Keeping God’s commandments from a sincere motivation is the only pleasing way to keep his commandments. Keeping them outwardly while rebelling in the heart is not loving God! In order to have the right motivation for keeping his commandments, we must learn to keep them because we believe they are not “burdensome.”—the Greek word is *bareiai*, “heavy.” His commandments are not intended to weigh us down and will not do so. His commandments will not depress us—will not harm us. The reason for that is, keeping his commandments overcomes the world!

It is the world that is your burden! It is the world that depresses you. It is the world with its wickedness, injustice, rottenness, futility, and transitoriness that gets you down! It is the world that defeats you and condemns you. It is the world that makes you afraid and frustrates the image of God in you! But all those begotten and continuing to be begotten (Greek *gegennemenon*, perfect tense verb) of God overcomes (Greek *nika*, from which we get the English word, “nike”) the world. The word *nika* is translated both, “overcome” and “victory”! “Overcoming” the world then, is being victorious over its wickedness, injustice, futility, and transitoriness. It is defeating the world’s depression, fear and frustration. And what is it that produces that victory? Faith—not feeling! And it is a faith based in objective history—and the object of that faith is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ (something done in history, witnessed empirically, and testified to—and recorded—accurately). Now that “victory”—so long as we absent from the Lord and in physical bodies—has to be qualified. We must understand that while here “we groan, awaiting the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:18ff; 2 Cor. 5:1ff), just as we are NOW children of God and NOW HAVE eternal life, so also, we ARE (*nika* is Greek present tense) NOW overcoming the world! We are winning! Evil is losing, injustice is losing, dissolution and temporalness is losing. The Lord Jesus Christ has conquered, defeated, and vanquished eternal death, our ultimate enemy!

John’s statement about Jesus being God-incarnate in his death (“blood”) is relevant even today because so many theologians deny the deity of Christ because he died on the cross. They do not acknowledge the resurrection and that God in Christ did not die! Clinton Gill writes: “Faith is not merely a positive attitude toward life. It is more than self-confidence. Christian faith is trusting-awareness in a divine-objective-Being beyond the human self! The object of the Christian faith is a Galilean carpenter, who, through certain phenomenal (empirical, historical) events in his life, was revealed to be the uniquely begotten Son of God; a visitor to this dimension from another arena of activity (God-incarnated). Of these phenomena, John selects two which suit the purpose of this epistle: his baptism and his death (and resurrection).” One form of 1st century Gnosticism, by a man named Cerinthus, claimed that whatever was divine about Jesus came upon him at his baptism and left him on the cross. John specifically denies this doctrine. Jesus did not come divinely from water (his

baptism) to end his divinity at his death (the blood). He came divinely through both baptism and death. John's revelation is that Jesus was divine before he was born, divine in his birth, divine before his baptism, divine after his baptism, divine before his death, divine during his death and divine after his death. If Jesus did not remain God as man when he died on the cross, then God did not express his love to the world in the death of Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:11-21; Col. 1:15-20; 2:9-10, etc.). The Greek preposition *en* would be better translated, "...not in the water only but in the water and in the blood..." When Jesus was in either status—water or blood—he was God's Son. There were supernatural signs abundantly given throughout all the adult ministry of Jesus (and even at his birth) testifying that he was God's Anointed (Messiah). There were never any signs that he lost that status, that he was stripped of it, or that he did not acknowledge it! This was especially true of his predictions about his death and resurrection. There were some 5 or 6 miraculous signals given in conjunction with his crucifixion of the uniqueness of his personage (temple curtain rent, earthquake, darkness in daytime, tombs of Jerusalem opened, etc.). The words of 5:7-8 in the KJV—"...in heaven, the Father, the Word and Holy Ghost, and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth..." are spurious (i.e., bogus, counterfeit). They are absent as such from every known ancient Greek manuscript except four, and even these four are from a translation of the Latin vulgate (not from Greek texts); the passage is quoted by none of the ancient Greek church "fathers"; the passage is absent from the manuscripts of all ancient Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions (which are the oldest versions available); the passage is not even found in the Old Latin Version. The earliest instance of this passage is in a Latin treatise (not scripture) dated A.D. 300-400 (see your marginal note in the NASV—the RSV does not even explain it marginally because it so apparently not a part of the original Greek text of 1 John).

1 John 5:7-8 include the "witness" (i.e. testimony) of the Spirit with the water and the blood (Christ's baptism and death/resurrection). The Greek text of these two verses reads, literally, "Because three there are, the ones bearing witness; the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three unto the one are." John reminds his readers of the witness of the Holy Spirit of God in all the events of Jesus' life to prove that he was God-incarnate. The Spirit testified by signs at his birth, his baptism, his ministry, his death on the cross, his resurrection and his ascension into heaven. The testimony of these events in Jesus' life are unto one point—that point is explained in 5:9-12. The Point is—Jesus was God's Anointed (God in the flesh, Messiah, see Dan. 9:24-27; Micah 5:2; Isa. 7:14; 53:1-12) all through his earthly life, before his earthly life, and after his earthly life. All these events agree! None of the events of Jesus' earthly life disagree with that point. None of them contradict it. The facts do not lie! Jesus was, is and is to come as Almighty God, himself! All these events agree also that eternal life is in Jesus, the Son of God. Whoever does not believe that, does not have eternal life! To the child of God, the most meaningful evidence available to prove the divinely-incarnate nature of Jesus is the testimony of the Spirit in the written word. There really is no other reliable testimony to that doctrine now that Jesus is no longer incarnate! The invisible Holy Spirit of God, visibly manifested his agreement with Jesus' own claims and deeds while he was here on earth!

The emphasis on God's "testimony" is to show the stark, glaring, perversity in the contrast between men accepting the fallible, fickle, disagreeing testimonies of men—while rejecting the infallible, steadfast, non-contradictory testimony of all of God's witnessing about his Son, Jesus Christ! For anyone today (or in John's day), or any other day, to declare that Jesus Christ is not God's Son, was not God in the flesh, is to call God a "liar"! And there are plenty of people today calling God, "Liar!" It is difficult to imagine any worse sin than calling God, "Liar!" What would we think of a jury today sitting on a trial concerning life and death, rejecting all the empirical evidence brought to witness? We would think it one of the most unjust, arrogant, despicable, unacceptable things we had ever known! We would disbar attorneys and impeach judges for such irrational, irresponsible behavior! Juries and officers of the court who would reject all the empirical evidence brought to bear witness would be calling the evidence, "Liar!" And the contrast is even more perverse when we realize just what kind of irresponsible, irrelevant impertinent, untrue kinds of "testimony" for which most people in the world clamor about Jesus Christ. They will listen to those who lie to them, exploit them, and otherwise misrepresent the truth because "it makes me feel good," or "everybody's doing it." They will listen to lying "experts" in science or religion tell them there is no God, no divine Son of God, no infallible, inerrant Word of God. All this they actually do for moral reasons—to suppress their guilt and indulge their passions. What must God think? What will God do (read 2 Thess. 1:8-9; 2:12ff; Heb. 10:26-31)?

The agent by which we have the Son, is the testimony. John is emphatic—there can be no question about it! John writes it in (5:10) in Greek: ho piseuon eis ton hion tou theo echei ten marturian en auto ho me pisteuon to theo pseusten pepoiken auton hoti ou pepisteuken eis ten marturian hen memartureken ho theos peri tou huiou autou, literally, "The one believing in the Son of the God has the witness (testimony) in him. The one not believing the God, a liar has made him, because he has not believed in the witness which has borne witness of the God concerning the Son of him." John writes it in (5:11) Greek: kai aute estin he marturia hoti zoen aionion edoken ho theos hemin kai haute he zoe en to huiou autou estin, literally, "And this is the testimony (witness) that life eternal gave God to us, and this, the life, in the Son of him is." The emphasis, you see, is on "having the testimony ("witness") of God IN one's mind and heart! THAT IS THE ONLY WAY A HUMAN HAS GOD AND CHRIST IN HIM/HER. The "testimony" is the word of the Holy Spirit. The word of the Holy Spirit is the "seed" of the Spirit. When that word is received (allowed to be implanted, Jas. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; Lk. 8:11,15) in the mind and heart of a human being, it produces the indwelling Spirit of God—which is, of course, the same as the indwelling of Christ, or the indwelling of God, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (actually, all three)! Christ comes to us bringing eternal life through the testimony of the Spirit of God! When that testimony is believed and obeyed, Christ comes into us making that eternal life a present reality! And it is all done through the agency of the testimony of the Holy Spirit—the written, spoken, believed and obeyed word, the Bible! "The testimony" is, unquestionably, the words of the apostles (especially, the Gospels and the Acts). According to John it is that direct, that objective. There is nothing secret, extra-Biblical (beyond the Bible), or experiential required! When we know we have the testimony in us, we know we have Christ in us, and eternal life in us! No one need be confused or uncertain about it! We have the testimony by believing it! We

know we believe it when we keep Christ's commandment of love (love like he loved—lay down our lives for God and fellow man)! The test for surety is objective—not subjective!

John's letter is a divinely inspired (apostolic) document explaining the procedure by which people may know whether or not they have Christ in them, and thus whether or not they have eternal life! John's letter sets forth three fundamental tests by which any person may verify his standing with God. They are: (a) belief; (b) love; (c) righteousness. (A) the person who believes that Jesus of Nazareth is God's Anointed (Christ), who was God in the flesh, and who made propitiation for the sins of mankind (believing to the extend of obeying the initial covenant requirements, confession, repentance, baptism) passes the first test; (B) the person who loves as Jesus loved, as God loved, by laying down his life for others, has passed the second test, because God's love has reached its purpose in such a person—the person must realize that his love for God has its motive (basis) in that God loved first (in the incarnation of God in Jesus—saved by grace!); (C) the person who meets the first two tests, has only one more to meet—such a person will “keep on purifying himself” Greek verb in 1 Jn. 3:3 hagnizei is present tense indicating continuing action) even as Christ went on purifying himself in his human incarnation—the daily battle against sin and for righteousness is (with the other two tests) assurance that such a person has eternal life—NOW, and is a child of God—NOW. There could hardly be a clearer, or more concise explanation of the fundamental issues of the Christian experience than John's First Epistle! CHERISH IT! READ IT OFTEN! TELL IT TO OTHERS!

If we are to try to find the author's meaning from the author's context, THE “MORTAL SIN” IS DENYING THAT JESUS OF NAZARETH IS GOD'S ANOINTED, GOD-INCARNATE, AND THE PROPITIATION FOR THE SINS OF MANKIND! It is, synonymously, “calling God a liar”! It is rejecting the “greater” testimony of God about his Son, Jesus! The word “mortal” in the RSV is an unfortunate translation. The Greek words are *estin hamartia pros thanaton*....literally, “there is a sin unto death.” This “sin unto death” is one which a Christian is directed not to petition (Greek, *erotese*, “ask, interrogate, beseech) God about on behalf of a “brother.” John has said just before this that if a Christian sees a “brother” sinning a sin that is not unto death, he shall ask (petition) and God will give to him life, i.e, that is to the one “not” sinning unto death. The “sin unto death” places the perpetrator in a condition where it is not right to ask (intercede) for his salvation! Denying the testimony of God that Jesus was God-incarnate, atoning for the sins of the world is a willful, deliberate, rejection of the only testimony which may be believed unto salvation, and anyone who does this cannot be a “Christian brother.” This does not say that those who have never heard the testimony are not to be prayed for (they are not yet “Christian brothers” but may be if they believe). This is someone who has had access to the testimony of God about his Son and has rebelled against it—has called God a “Liar!” It is, of course, the same as the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30; and the same as apostasy in Heb. 6:1-8; 10:1-39 that impenitent Jews and Gentiles who have the word of God commit today.

Christians know that any one born (actually, continuing to be begotten, Greek gegennemenos, perfect tense verb) cannot continue in sin as a way of life. He will admit he has sinned, pray for forgiveness through his “Advocate” Jesus Christ, and trust the faithfulness of God to forgive! That means he is sure he is saved so long as he is humbly confessing his faults and depending on God to forgive! Christians know that when they are doing that, the evil one (Satan) has no way to “lay a finger on the believer.” Satan has no accusation or power to bring against a repenting Christian. The evil one may go on tempting, and winning a few momentary skirmishes, but so long as the Christian is in Christ, he is winning! Christians know that they are of God because they believe Jesus was God-incarnate, because they love like he loved, and because they are continually purifying themselves. They also know that anyone not living that kind of life is under the power of the evil one. Actually the Greek word translated “in the power of” in 1 John 5:19 is keitai and is the word from which we get the English word, coitus. In other words, “the whole world (anyone not in Christ) is having intercourse with, “is in bed with,” the devil.” There is no escaping it—there is no middle ground—he that is not with Christ is against him (Matt. 12: 25-37). Christians know that the Son of God has come and has given them understanding. They do not have to guess about eternal life. They do not have to be uncertain. They know from the authentic, trustworthy, historical record (the Bible) that Jesus Christ is true to his word! They know he always keeps his promises. They know he means what he says, and says what he means. They know this not from some subjective, up-and-down mood or feeling they may have, but from objective evidence, seen, heard and touched by human beings some 2000 years ago and delivered to us through unimpeachable testimony (the Bible)!

## TEACHER'S NOTES 2 &amp; 3 John

by Paul T. Butler

We know the truth abides in us when we keep his commandments. This is clearly stated in John's first epistle (see 1 Jn. 1:3-5; 2:14; 2:24-27; 3:19-24; 4:6; 4:12; 5:2-3; 5:10). God has not left us to make subjective guesses about this. There is an objective measurement by which we may know if the truth abides in us or not--- keeping his commandments. John also puts it in a negative way, He who says, I know him, but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him... 1 Jn. 2:4. In 2 Jn. the apostle puts it abiding in the doctrine v. 9 and in 3 Jn. following the truth v. 3. Of course, none of us ever keep his commandments perfectly, without sin, not even the apostles. But John has dealt with that situation in 1 Jn. 1:5---2:6. John emphasizes three things in his 3 epistles---faith, obedience, and love. The greatest of these is love.

The very idea of following the truth indicates a continuing, life-long, exercise. It indicates that we can never catch-up with and completely conquer the truth. It will always be out in front of us, leading us to higher and more profound levels of knowing, understanding and abiding in it. Following the truth also suggests there might be other things or ways to follow. Especially the way of falsehood, untruth, and lies. So, it will demand work to know the truth, courage to choose it over falsehood, and commitment to abide in (live in, reside in) it. Truth must become our home. When we stray from it we must feel lost, when we recognize it we must long to be where it is and live in it like we would our homes. It doesn't matter where others abide, the Christian must be at home in the truth. The rest of the world must see the Christian living at his home in the truth. It is in the truth that the Christian finds sustenance, rest, security, and safety, because that's his spiritual home.

The fundamental commandment for the Christian is love one another. John doesn't equivocate. There's no great secret commandment--- it is simply love one another. All the way through his epistles, the apostle John uses the Greek word *agape*, for love which is always used to describe God's love. It is higher and holier than any of the other Greek words used for love (e.g., *phileo*, *eros*, *storge*). *Agape* is the love that cares about and for others when they make themselves difficult to care about. *Agape* is the love that is based on determination and commitment---an exercise of the will. It's the love that cares when one does not feel like caring. It's the love that bears with the failings of the weak, not pleasing ourselves... (Rom. 15:1-2). It's the love that counts others better than oneself (Phil. 2:3-4). It isn't easy to love like God loves. God loved us when we were still his enemies (Rom. 5:6-11). That's how we must love.

We know we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. (1 Jn. 5:2-3). You see, there is even an objective criterion by which we may know when we are loving---

keeping God's commandments! We don't have to guess about whether we are loving or not. We just look up his commandments in the Bible and see if we are keeping them! By the way, as we learned in 1 Jn. 4:20-21, there is only one way to love God and that is by loving our brothers! We love God vicariously through loving human beings! LOVE IS NOT SELF-DEFINING! Love cannot be defined by secular criteria! LOVE CAN ONLY BE DEFINED BY GOD---AND HE DEFINES IT IN HIS COMMANDMENTS (i.e., in his revealed word, the Bible)! That may sound simplistic or intolerant to lots of people, but GOD HAS SPOKEN and we have no right to contradict him!

If Jesus Christ is not acknowledged (i.e., believed, confessed, obeyed) as Almighty God, Jehovah, who came to earth in the flesh and died a vicarious death and arose from the dead, then there is no salvation. For by the law (neither by the one given to Moses nor any of the laws {religions} made up by any human beings) shall no flesh be justified. If Jesus was not the One and Only True God incarnated in a fleshly body as the New Testament testifies, then everything is relative to human intelligence. If Jesus was not God in the flesh, the Bible is a hoax---the greatest, most shameful hoax ever perpetrated! IT IS THE ONE DOCTRINE UPON WHICH EVERYTHING ELSE CHRISTIANS BELIEVE RESTS. As Walter Scott (great Restoration Movement preacher of the 19th century) said, Jesus's Messiahship (i.e., Kingship) is based on historical evidence; Jesus's teachings have authority based on his Messiahship! In other words, if Jesus is who he claimed to be then his teachings are the ultimate TRUTH!

THERE IS NO SINGULAR ANTICHRIST! Please check it out for yourself---open your Bible to 1 John 2:18 and read it! Children, it is "a" (the Greek article is indefinite) last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now MANY (my emphasis) antichrists HAVE (my emphasis) come. Plainly, many antichrists had already come when John wrote his first epistle. The only other references to antichrist are: 1 Jn. 2:22; 1 Jn. 4:3 (and in 4:3 John says, This is the spirit {it is a spirit or mind-set in many unbelievers} of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already (my emphasis) and, finally, in our lesson today, 2 Jn. 7, which defines the spirit of antichrist as men (plural) who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.... The man of lawlessness of 2 Thess. 2:1-12 is NOT the same as the antichrist of John's epistles. THE is a definite article in the Greek text of 2 Thess. so we have a distinct entity (probably the Roman Catholic Papacy) to whom Paul was referring, who was being held in check (by the Roman empire) when Paul was writing but would be revealed some time after Paul's epistle and will be ultimately slain when Jesus comes at the Second Coming (see Thinking Through Thessalonians, by Wilbur Fields, College Press). There are billions of people espousing doctrines that deny Jesus Christ was God-incarnated---Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, Hindus, Christian-liberal-theologians, New Agers---so we have billions of antichrists in the world today, just as there were (polloi) many in John's day! They dishonor God (Jn. 5:23).

John writes, Everyone going forward and not remaining in the teaching of Christ does not have God. The Greek word *didache*, is translated doctrine in the KJV and RSV, but is translated teaching in NIV (2 Jn. 9,10). Some synonyms for the English word doctrine are tenet, dogma, canons, creed, avowal, confession. But to which teaching or dogma, or confession is John referring? The context makes it clear he is referring to the confession or dogma that Jesus Christ was God-incarnate! The word doctrine or indoctrinate has come on hard times in our culture. Public education gurus abhor the idea that children should be indoctrinated in the public schools. The word has come to have the connotation that anyone who is being indoctrinated does not think for themselves---they are merely robots being propagandized with someone else's opinions. ALL TEACHING AND LEARNING IS A PROCESS OF INDOCTRINATION! As humans we all have the capacity to think---but none of us have the facts to think about until someone else indoctrinates us with the facts! Eventually, according to the way the facts are taught us, we all come to a world-view. Unless we are very alert to examine whether the facts being presented to us are really facts and not fictions we will come up with a skewed world-view. The indoctrination of our children with the fiction (represented as facts) of evolution is a classic example of what I am trying to illustrate. Teaching evolution in our public schools as if it is factual is indoctrination in the wicked connotation of the word. Teaching the Gospel accounts to our children with the evidence to prove (beyond reasonable doubt) that they are factual is indoctrination in the righteous connotation of the word.

The Greek words, *me lambanete auton eis oikian*, are literally, ...do not receive him into house. There is no article before *oikian*, or house. So which house does John specify? The Greek word for house is accusative/singular making house the direct object of the verb not receive. When John wrote his epistle Christians had no official church buildings. They met in homes and other buildings or out in the open. But to refuse to bring anyone in need into one's personal home and minister to that need would directly disobey the admonition (more than once) that Christians are to be hospitable to strangers (see Lk. 14:12-14; Matt. 25:35-36; Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9, etc.). My personal opinion is that John is saying, If anyone comes to you wanting to become a member of the church but denies that Jesus Christ was God-Incarnate, do not receive him into the church or in any way give him or anyone else the impression that such a person is a member of the church or is a Christian. I think John is using the word house as a metaphor for the church. Such people may be good moral people, or people in need (mostly in need to acknowledge Jesus as God), but they are not Christians until they are convinced and confess Jesus' deity!

While John warns the church to be very careful about those whom they receive into membership, he is unequivocal about commending the brethren for sending forth some fellow Christians who had come to them preaching and teaching the Gospel (3 Jn. 5-8). John confirms the teaching of Jesus and the apostle Paul that those who preach the gospel should be financially supported by those who receive their teaching (see Matt. 10:10; Lk. 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:1-18; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15-20; 1 Tim. 5:18, etc.). Missionaries and evangelists who devote all their time and energies to proclaiming the word of Christ must not be left by

the church to depend on unbelievers for financial support! The church today must get serious about supporting MORE ministers (whether in the U.S. or abroad). The modern church is wasting too much money on its own comfort and cultural-trappings (i.e., massive church buildings, keeping-up-with-the-world in fads and fashions in everything from music to gymnasiums to counselors, and banquet halls) while billions of people go to hell for lack of messengers taking the message! Young people today who are committing themselves to mission fields have to beg, beg, and beg to get the most meager funds out of hundreds of different congregations to get to a field open and waiting to hear the Gospel. LET US NOT RATIONALIZE OR TRY TO JUSTIFY OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO GIVE UP SOME CREATURE COMFORTS TO CHANNEL MORE OF OUR CHURCH BUDGETS TOWARD MISSIONS. Remember how poor the Lord of Glory became so that we might become rich with truth (not possessions).

The answer to this question depends on the definition of good. Doing good has to include keeping the commandments of God and Christ (remember the Gospel of John 6:28-29 & 1 Jn. 5:3). Just as love is not to be humanly-defined, neither is doing good. Doing the best good would be to hear the Gospel of Christ and obey it. Doing the second best good would be to take the message of the Gospel to someone else who has never heard or had the opportunity to respond. If doing good in that level is being done--- doing good on the level of charitable actions toward people's physical needs will inevitably follow.

## Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. Paul began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Hose Bible College. He enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

Paul taught at Ozark Christian College from 1961 to 2004. He also served at registrar for the college.

## Introduction to the Sound Bible Study project.

The Sound Bible Study project is a cooperative effort of Christian educators and Jordan Media Enterprises LLC to provide the serious examination of the Scriptures for the conscientious student. All the teachers are experienced educators who have spent countless hours in the classroom on both sides of the lectern. The audio recordings and written notes are made available for those who wish to learn God's Word at a collegiate level but have been unable to matriculate. There is no intention to compete with the many faithful Bible schools, but rather to serve along side and strengthen both the student and the teacher for a stronger and more effective Kingdom of God that knows how to properly divide the Word of God.

