

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

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I. WRITER: John

John was the son of Zebedee. Comparing Mathew 27:56 and Mark 15:40, his mother seems to have been Salome, and who by comparing to John 19:25, seems to have been a sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. If so, then John was a cousin of Jesus, and may have known Him from childhood.

John's family may have been wealthy. They were in a business partnership that employed "hired servants". And Zebedee's wife (Salome?) was one of the women who ministered to Christ of her substance, supporting His ministry financially. Besides the fishing business in Capernaum, they maybe had a house in Jerusalem (John 19:27) and were a personal acquaintance of the high priest (John 18:15,16). He was a convert of John the Baptist.

According to history, John made Jerusalem his headquarters, caring for Mary (Jesus' mother) till her death, and, after the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD), made his residence at Ephesus, being a pastor of that church that Paul had started. He supposedly lived in Ephesus to great age, and wrote his Gospel, his Three Epistles, and on the Isle of Patmos, the book of The Revelation.

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John Phillips wrote a nice introduction to the 1st epistle of John that I'd like to read:

"John was a very old man, feeling the weight of his years and aware that his days on earth were about done. He was the last living apostle. A godly life lay behind him and a very long memory thrilled him. His native land was far away in the land of Israel, although he now lived in Ephesus, a pagan Asiatic city on the edge of the European world. Probably he had come there to escape the Roman war, which had engulfed his homeland and brought about the downfall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and a virtual end to Jewish national life.

John had been born at Bethsaida, a fishing village on the Sea of Galilee not far from Capernaum. He had been one of a family of four: his father, a well-to-do fisherman; his mother, Salome, sister to the Virgin Mary; and his brother, James, the first apostle to be martyred.

Of all the apostles, John seems to have been closest to the Lord. Not only was he the Lord's cousin, according to the flesh, he was one of the first two disciples called. Along with his brother, James, and his fishing partner, Peter, he had held a privileged position in the apostolic circle (Matt. 17:1; 26:37; Mark 5:37). Further, John is described as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

John is mentioned three times in the book of Acts in connection with the very early days of the Jerusalem church (3:1; 4:13; 8:14). After the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15; Gal. 2:9), he disappeared for over forty years, coming back into the spotlight toward the end of the first century to deal with a rising tide of apostasy (falling away from truth).

By nature, John had a fiery disposition—the Lord Jesus nicknamed him "son of thunder" (Mark 3:17). But his fiery disposition had been greatly mellowed by the passing of time and by his growth in grace and in the knowledge of God. His writings reveal a tender note, but as these epistles make clear, John would not stand for half measures when it came to revealed truth.

He writes in terms of black and white with no tones of gray. As John saw it, everything is true or false, right or wrong, light or darkness, love or hate, life or death. Things are either good or bad. It is interesting to note that no Old Testament quotations appear in John's epistles. That, coupled with a reference to idolatry, suggests that when he wrote, John had Gentile converts particularly in mind.

He had lived through a turbulent century. Nero, in 64 AD had launched the Roman Empire on a three-hundred-year persecution of the church. And now in power was Domitian, who reigned from 81 to 96 AD. He launched the second official Roman persecution of Christians—spies and informers lurked everywhere, and there stood "an executioner at every door." Domitian's appearance in the Coliseum was the signal for people to murder one another with sword and spear to heighten the blood lust of the mob.

Such was the Roman world in which John had lived and survived. Such was the world in which the churches of Jesus Christ, assailed by enemies from without, was now being threatened by a much greater enemy: error from within. John thus felt compelled to write."

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II. AUDIENCE: None stated but most likely churches of Asia.

III. DATE: 90 A.D.

Unknown. Traditionally, it was thought that John wrote his Gospel first, his Epistles second around 90 AD, and The Revelation last (96 AD).

IV. NOTES:

Christianity had been in the world about 60 or 70 years now and in many parts of the Roman Empire had become an important religion and a powerful influence. There thus came to be all sorts of efforts to compromise the Gospel with prevailing philosophies and systems of thought at the time.

Gnosticism was disrupting the churches in John's day. This form of Gnosticism taught that there is a principle of dualism in humans: the body (thought to be evil) and the spirit (thought to be good). It taught that Jesus was a man and Christ (Messiah) was spirit. Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary (i.e., denied the virgin birth), and that at His baptism, the heavenly Christ descended upon Him in the form of a dove. Then before going to the cross, the Christ left Jesus again, so that Jesus (man only) died and rose again, but the Christ (all Deity) did not suffer. In essence, they denied the incarnation that Christ had actually become flesh.

Gnosticism changed the concept of God and creation. They believed that all humans had a “divine spark” or basically was their own god. They elevated knowledge as the way to obtain salvation or enlightenment. It is still in our world today in the form of the New Age movement. Even in America, Gnostic thinking has been growing over the past 50 years so that about 25% of Americans believe in some of their core teachings.

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From John Phillips’ commentary on the Epistle’s of John:

“John wrote for the third generation of believers. Peter and Paul, James and Jude all wrote for the first and second generations of believers. John, however, as a first generation apostle, passed over two generations to write for an increasingly apostate third generation.

For by its third generation, every movement of God needs a fresh touch of the Holy Spirit. The first generation is motivated by *conviction*; great truths have been grasped, and those who have espoused them have a compulsion to spread those truths abroad. They will dare all and die for them. The second generation inherits these truths, but the conviction softens into a *belief*. They believe the truths they have been taught; they debate them, defend them, and disseminate them, but the fire and passion have gone. By the third generation, the belief becomes an *opinion*. The third generation will trade first-generation truth, dilute it, change it, accept counterfeits, and make room for error. And that’s why John wrote for the third generation—the third generation needed a fresh revival.”

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OUTLINE OF I JOHN

- I. God is Light (1:1 - 2:2)
 - A. Prologue (1:1-2)
 - B. Fellowship with God (1:3 -2:2)

- II. God is Love (2:3 - 4:21)
 - A. Walk in love (2:3-14)
 - B. Love not the world (2:15-28)
 - C. Love one another (2:29 - 4:21)

- III. God is Life (Chapter 5).
 - A. Victory over the world assured (5:1-5)
 - B. Assurance of Salvation (5:6-21)

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- I. God is Light (1:1 - 2:2).
 - A. Prologue (1: 1-2)

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

Heard, seen, and touched: John is emphasizing that God became flesh, in human form, which makes sense because he is combating the gnostic teaching that was invading the churches.

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

The life was manifest in the flesh. Jesus is “the life”. He said in,

John 14:6 - “I am the way, the truth, and the life”

1 Timothy 3:16 - God was manifest in the flesh

Colossians 2:9 - For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

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B. Fellowship with God (1:3 - 2:2)

1. By walking in light (1:3-7)

1:3 - ³That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John’s primary reason for writing this epistle: “that ye also may have fellowship with us”.

Amos 3:3 - “How can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

He stresses that he is right with God, when he says “truly our fellowship is with the Father”. And throughout this book he will be writing things that reveal false professions and true professions. But also, what it means to be in fellowship with God if we are saved.

If we are saved, he wants us to know it, but if we are not saved, he wants us to see that as well and get it settled, “that ye also may have fellowship with us.” And if we are saved, but not living right, he wants to help us get right, “that ye also may have fellowship with us.”

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

If our fellowship with God is right: our joy will be full.

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

God is light. Light illuminates the darkness. It reveals the truth as well as flaws and impurities. Light also speaks of the purity of God. Light also guides men, pointing out the path (Psalm 119:105 – thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path).

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

John is quick to bring up false professions. As the gnostic apostasy crept in, and the second and third generations of Christians had come along, the gospel had been corrupted and diluted with the result that false professions had increased. John was writing to expose that. Fellowship with God is not simply in a profession (or a prayer). There needs to be evidence, a walking in the light.

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

The evidence that we have been cleansed by the blood of Christ is that we “walk in the light”. And if we do walk in the light, we will have fellowship with the brethren. If we possess Christ, we will “walk in the light”. The blood of Christ cleanses us from ALL sin, so that we may have fellowship with God.

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2. By confessing sin (1:8-10)

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

No one is more self-deceived than the man who cannot see his own sin. We can gain victory over sin in this life, but never be totally free of sin until we are in the glorified body.

1:9 - ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God is faithful to the promises concerning the effectiveness of the blood of Christ. The way to restore fellowship with God is to confess our sin. That is, we are to agree with Him, looking at our sin from His side. It is not just saying the sin. This form of “confessing” then, requires repentance, turning away from the sin. It does not mean we will never do it again, but that we do not want to.

1:10 - ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

God is clear that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:10,23). Anyone deluded enough to actually think or say they have not sinned is then calling God a liar, and His Word is obviously not in them.

3. By the advocacy of Christ (2:1-2)

2:1 - ¹My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

To have fellowship with God, we are to “sin not”. But that is impossible as we just read. And that’s why John writes “and if any man sin there’s a remedy... we have an advocate with the Father”.

With God’s new nature within us, our desire to please Him ought to cause us to sin less. But if we do sin, and that fellowship is broken, we have an “advocate”. Greek writers used the term to refer to a legal advisor or one who comes forward on behalf of and as the representative of another, interceding for them. Christ is then, “one who will come to your side to help in every time of need”.

2:2 - ²And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*.

Christ, the Advocate, is also the “propitiation”, meaning the payment. He paid the penalty for our sin.

Romans 3:25 - “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...”.

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II. God is Love (2:3 - 4:21).

A. Walk in love (2:3-14)

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

Christ said in John 14:15, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”. This has nothing to do with our salvation depending upon obedience. It is talking about assurance.

Hereby we do know that we know Him. John is answering the Gnostics who claimed to have a special knowledge of Him: yet they were not even keeping His commands. So, obedience to Christ is essential to assurance.

2:4-6 - ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. ⁶He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Profession without possession will be made known by its lack of obedience. Christ said in

John 10:27 - My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

If we are truly His, then we will have a desire to hear His Word and obey Him. The deepest heart-desire of a child of God ought to be to want to please God.

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

The old commandment which we had from the beginning is the “new commandment” Christ gave His apostles. That is, that ye love one another.

2:8 - ⁸Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Yet, John also calls it a “new commandment”, as Christ did. He is about to describe to us what this old commandment and new commandment is in verses 9 and 10.

2:9-11 - ⁹He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. ¹⁰He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. ¹¹But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

If a child of God is walking in the light, John is saying he will not hate his brother. The hatred of a brother reveals that we are obviously not in the light. We can claim to have all sorts of spirituality, but if a love for brothers and sisters in Christ is absent, we are in darkness.

Is it possible to have hatred for a saved person and still be saved yourself? Certainly. It is no different than any other sin, such as not loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind at all times. Our love for God waxes cold at times. Love for the brethren can also wax cold at times.

All forms of sin enter our life and our fellowship with God is broken, needing to be restored by confession of the sin. One sign of a true believer according to Hebrews 12:6-8 is that God will chasten a believer who does not confess their sin. If one can continue in sin without being chastened by God, then that person is unsaved. We will discuss more of this in chapter 3.

2:12 - ¹²I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.

The phrase “little children” is a term of affection by a teacher to his disciples. Christ said in

John 13:33 - Little children, yet a little while I am with you...

Galatians 4:19 - My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.

Most believe this refers to all believers, regardless of their age or maturity as believers, because no matter how much we have grown, we are all simply forgiven by God.

2:13 - ¹³I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is from the beginning*. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

“Fathers” are the saints who have grown and matured. They have been through trials and tribulations. Their faith has been strengthened by the testing.

“Young men” are not as mature as the fathers. They do not yet have the experience that the fathers have and so do not “know” Christ in the way that the fathers do. But they have learned to overcome the wicked one by the blood of Christ. They have learned to be victorious and to live for God.

2:14 - ¹⁴I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is from the beginning*. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Once again, the “fathers” are those who have known Christ. The “young men” have overcome the devil and are strong because the Word of God abides in them. The secret to overcoming is once again revealed, “the word of God abideth in you”. Again and again God’s Word is stressing to us how important the Word of God is to our salvation and to our life in Christ.

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B. Love not the World (2:15-28)

Christianity is based on a relationship to Christ. “We love him, because he first loved us.” (I John 4:19). But we cannot love the world and Christ at the same time.

2:15-17 - ¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things *that are in the world*. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

This is speaking about having affection for the “world system”, i.e., for popularity, for acceptance of the world, for power in this world, for gain, for the lusts of the flesh, for comforts, etc. All this material creation and everything in it will be burned up and will one day vanish: what a waste for it to have our heart.

2:16-17 - ¹⁶For all that *is in the world*, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

“The lust of the flesh” (the desire to do what I want): Eve fell for this when she saw that the tree was good for food (she craved it). Christ overcame this when He rebuked Satan for tempting Him to make the stones into bread. For men, sexual lust for women probably falls under this category.

“The lust of the eyes” (the desire to have what I want): Eve fell for this when she saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and Christ overcame this when Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. Covetousness in its many forms falls under this category.

“The pride of life” (the desire to be what I want to be): Eve fell for this when she saw that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, and Christ overcame this when Satan tempted Him to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple. Pride and the seeking of vainglory, for power, for popularity falls under this category.

These are the three appeals that the world makes to us.

2:18,19 - ¹⁸Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Notice John says “it is the last time”. The apostasy had already started, and the spirit of antichrist had already manifested. And the antichrists are known by the fact that they could not continue with the true saints of God. They “went out from us”.

Denial of the Deity of Christ and the Incarnation of Christ are two marks of the spirit of antichrist. Not everyone that leaves a church is “an antichrist”. They could be backslidden or lost. But John’s point is that those who hold to that doctrine really cannot stay long amongst those who do.

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

This “unction” is anointing of the Holy Ghost mentioned again in verse 27.

2:21-23 - ²¹I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ²²Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. ²³Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (*but*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

Denial of the Deity of Christ is a roadblock to salvation. Refusal to accept that Christ was indeed God will result in eternal death in Hell. Jehovah’s Witnesses need to be made aware of this truth.

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

We are to continue to reinforce our faith and knowledge of Christ by repeatedly reading, memorizing and meditating on His Word to abide in Him. That is how we abide in Christ, by taking His Word and applying it to our lives.

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

The only kind of life that God offers is eternal life, eternal security.

John 5:24 - ... He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

2:26-27 - ²⁶These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you (lead you astray). ²⁷But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Seduce means “to lead astray, to lead from the truth”. It leads one to commit spiritual adultery. The Comforter, the Holy Ghost will lead us into truth:

John 16:13 - Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

2:28 - ²⁸And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

The second coming of Christ is a motivation for holy living. A motivation to abide in Him.

Slide 12

C. Love One Another (2:29-4:21)

1. The Father’s Love for His Children (2:29-3:3)

2:29 - ²⁹If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

The final proof of salvation obedience to the Word of God. His sheep will follow Him. God’s children will take after their Father. If they do not take after their Father, they must not be His children. This is not “sinless perfection”, but if we are a child of God, there is that desire to please God in our heart that will be constantly constraining us to obey.

3:1-3 - ¹Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. ²Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. ³And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

John starts with “Behold”. He wants us to be overwhelmed by the enormity of God’s love in that He has made us His sons. And because we are His children, we share His nature and the world does not recognize us, or even begin to understand us, because it did not know or begin to understand Him:

John 16:2,3 - ... yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

What will saved people look like after the rapture? It is difficult to fully understand what we will become at His return, but we can know that it will be beyond our greatest expectations:

Romans 8:18 - For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

But this verse says that we shall be like Him in our glorified body. And this hope, being like Him, motivates us to holiness. **Go to slide 13**

2. The Two Natures of the Believer in Action (3:4-3:24)

3:4-5 - ⁴Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. ⁵And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Sin is defined here as “the transgression of the law”. So, this is a good verse to start with before you being to show someone the law, the 10 commandments.

Christ was manifested for the sole purpose of taking away our sin: not just to pay the price for it, but also to deliver us from it. He provides the power to remove the guilt of sin and to deliver us from the habit of sinning. He has given us a new nature. The more we abide in Him, the less we will sin.

3:6-10 - ⁶Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. ⁷Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. ⁸He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

This passage has confused many people. What does John mean in verse 6, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not”; in verse 8, “He that committeth sin is of the devil”; in verse 9, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin?” Does this mean if we sin, we are of the devil and have lost our salvation? No! Is it possible for a child of God to sin? YES! God expects it and makes provision (1 Jn 1:9).

“Let no man deceive you” means that it is possible to be deceived on this point. The entire New Testament makes it clear that if we are a child of God, there will be evidence of that in our life.

There are some who interpret the word doeth, commit, or committeth as habitual practice. So, the lost person habitually practices sin and the saved person does not habitually practice sin.

However, the word doeth, commit or committeth are all translated from the same Greek word meaning “to make, to endow a person or thing with a certain quality”.

The lost person does sin or brings forth sin, because they are endowed with that quality of making sin. In other words, it is their nature to sin. Do they habitually practice it? Sure, but the emphasis is that it is their nature or character to sin. Defining it as “habitually practice” puts the emphasis on their outward behavior. Defining it as “it is their nature to sin” puts the emphasis on the unchanged heart.

Reading verse 9 this way would read: “Whosoever is born of God does not have the nature to sin; for God’s seed remaineth in him.”

Regarding verse 6, “whosoever abideth in him sinneth not”, Barnes states:

“The language used is designed to say he does not commit habitual and willful transgression. Such language is common throughout the Bible, when it is said of one man that he is a saint, and of another that he is a sinner.”

The child of God is revealed by the “righteousness” that he does. He/she has the character to make righteousness: because they have Christ in them (his seed remaineth in them). The nature to commit sin is what makes a lost person a “child of the devil”.

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

Cain, although he was Abel’s brother, was deeply jealous of God rejecting him and his sacrifice but accepting Abel and his sacrifice. Cain is a picture of all those who hold to a works salvation and persecute those who believe in salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.

3:13 - ¹³Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Christ warned us that since the world hated Him, it would also hate us:

John 15:18,19 - If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

3:14-15 - ¹⁴We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. ¹⁵Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Once again, the fruit of salvation is a love for brother and sisters in Christ.

3:16-18 - ¹⁶Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ¹⁸My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

God’s love, agape love, was manifested by action. It is sacrificing to meet a need in another. Jesus laid down His life for us, meeting our need for salvation. True agape love for the brethren requires action, a self-sacrificial giving and doing, not just lip-service.

3:19-21 - ¹⁹And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. ²⁰For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. ²¹Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.

We can know we are “of the truth” (i.e., saved) by all those things previously listed, like loving the brethren in deed, self-sacrificial giving for the brethren, having a tendency to do “righteousness”, not a habitual practicing of sin. If those things are lacking, our hearts will “condemn” us by the Holy Spirit within us. This also seems to apply to being right with God in reference to prayer mentioned next in verse 22. If our heart does not condemn us by the Holy Spirit, it gives us assurance in prayer.

3:22-24 - ²²And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. ²³And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. ²⁴And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

Love in action gives assurance in prayer. When our life is pleasing to God, when the lines of fellowship are open between us and God, we can expect Him to hear and answer our prayers.

And the commandment that is emphasized is “That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ”. We are saved by faith, but even after we are saved, we are to live by faith, because “without faith it is impossible to please him....” (Hebrews 11:6).

The second commandment that is emphasized is “and love one another”: because if we abide in Him, we will love one another. We abide in Him by keeping his commandments:

John 15:7,10 - If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. ¹⁰If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

Slide 14

3. Warning Against False Teachers (4:1-6)

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

John now warns us against false prophets. The first fact is that there are many false prophets which are gone out into the world. We are to “try” or test the spirits. Test them with what?

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Isaiah 8:20 - “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

And test their fruit as Christ said in Matthew 7:15,16. What fruit is their ministry producing? Not the numbers, but the fruit of the Spirit within them and their followers. The Bible is clear who is behind these false prophets:

2 Corinthians 11:3,4,13-15 - But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*. ¹³For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness;

4:2-3 - ²Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ³And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

The first test of judging the spirits is the incarnation of Christ, which may also include the Deity of Christ. The spirit of antichrist seems to attack those two doctrines first.

4:4 - ⁴Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Being born again, we are to be overcomers, and will be overcomers through Christ by faith.

1 John 5:4,5 - For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

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

False teachers really do get a following, but mostly of lost people. The cults usually grow faster than true churches. Lost people do not respond to God's Word, but God's people do.

John 8:47 - "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

John 10:27 - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"

Slide 16

4. God is Love: God's Children Will Love Each Other (4:7-4:21)

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

God is love. Every one that is born of God will have the ability to love as He loves. Not that we apply it all the time, but an absence of that selfless love (agape) that seeks to meet another's needs and does what is necessary to meet it, means that person "knoweth not God".

4:9-11 - ⁹In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Agape love, by definition, must be manifested by action. God met the need of the ones He loved by doing what was necessary to redeem them. He sent His only begotten Son into the world to shed His sinless blood and die on the cross, "that we might live through him". If God has done all that, manifesting His love to us, we ought also to love one another.

4:12 - ¹²No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

If no one has seen God at any time, then who did Isaiah see in Isaiah 6:1-5? Who did Moses and the 70 elders of Israel see in Exodus 24:9-11? They saw the LORD, Jehovah Jesus! They saw Jesus Christ. There are many references in the Old Testament referring to Jehovah (LORD) that are revealed to be Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Write these down and compare them later:

* Isaiah 44:6 with Revelation 22:13

* Isaiah 45:21-23 with Philippians 2:10, 11

* Jeremiah 17:10 with Revelation 2:23

We cannot see God the Father, but if we are saved and love one another, He dwells in us and His love is "perfected" in us. God is manifested in this world today by believers loving each other (John 13:35).

4:13-16 - ¹³Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. ¹⁶And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

The Holy Ghost within us gives us assurance. The presence of the Spirit within should bear fruit in our lives, giving evidence of His presence. Agape love is one such evidence, we cannot work it up in the flesh. This love is also revealed when we take the gospel of Christ to a lost world that does not want Him or His message of salvation.

4:17-18 - ¹⁷Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Boldness on the day of judgment comes from exercising agape love. When God's love is abiding in us, it casts out fear. If there is fear in our hearts, we are not "made perfect in love":

2 Timothy 1:7 - "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

4:19 - ¹⁹We love him, because he first loved us.

God is the initiator, we respond. He draws, we respond, After all, "there is none that seeketh after God." We cannot work up a love for Him in the flesh. But as we come to realize how much He loves us: our love for Him grows. We respond to His love. So, seeing His love for us in His Word and what He has done for us in our life increases our love for Him.

4:20-21 - ²⁰If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? ²¹And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Finally, John says, we are lying if we say we love God, but do not love the brethren.

Slide 17

III. God is Life (Chapter 5)

A. Victory Over the World (5:1-5)

5:1-3 - ¹Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Well, the second part of the verse says if we are saved there will be some evidence. We will have God's nature and agape love for other saved people. Our love of God, our salvation is manifested by our new nature and the desire to keep His commandments, and they are not "grievous", or heavy. They do not impose a burden when they are kept. "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:30). The point is they impose no burden on us because we are keeping them through love. We love God because He first loved us and we want to please Him.

5:4-5 - ⁴For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. ⁵Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Faith is "the victory that overcometh the world". It is faith that saves us, it is faith that pleases God (Heb. 11:6), it is faith that gets answered prayer. We are to walk by faith (Colossians 2:6,7). And it is faith that allows us to overcome as Christ exhorts us in Revelation 2 and 3.

B. Assurance of Salvation (5:6-21)

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

John wrote in his gospel that one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and out came blood and water. Why does he emphasize it again here? I think to refute the Gnostic teaching that Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh and teaching that He didn't really die.

What is meant by "he that came by water" in verse 6? It may mean he came by human birth and was truly flesh. Others say the water speaks of the Word of God which also has a lot of scripture backing it up.

5:7 - ⁷For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Verse 7 may be the most contended verse in the Bible. It is the clearest statement on the Deity of Christ and the Trinity. And according to the critics who do not want it in the Bible, is "not found in the oldest manuscripts". True, it is not found in the textus vaticanus and alexandricus. Those texts came from manuscripts by Origen, who lived 185 to 254 AD. He deleted verses such as this one that did not agree with his theology.

5:8 - ⁸And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

Probably the best way to understand verse 8 is "the water, blood, and Spirit being in agreement are summarizing the fact that Jesus was born a physical man, died a physical death, and was resurrected.

5:9 - ⁹If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

God testified of His Son, spoke from Heaven following His baptism (Matthew 3:16,17), and on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5).

5:10 - ¹⁰He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

If we have been born again ("he that believeth on the Son"), we have "the witness in himself": Romans 8:16 "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

5:11-12 - ¹¹And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Simply put, eternal life is in His Son. We must receive Christ on His terms to be born again and have eternal life. Eternal life is to have Christ. It all boils down to this one point: do we have Christ or not, have we received Him or not?

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

John here gives two reasons for writing this epistle. First, that the reader would know he or she has eternal life: i.e., assurance of salvation. Second, that they might believe on Christ: i.e., building up their faith in Him. In reading the epistle, the readers would discern their own faith, whether true or not, and if true that they would have assurance.

Christ was clear that He wanted His disciples to know they were saved, to have assurance of their salvation. He didn't want them to "hope so".

5:14-15 - ¹⁴And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: ¹⁵And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Anything that a child of God asks, "according to His will", God hears. But how can we know we are praying according to His will? His will is of course known by His Word. By praying according to either 1) his commandments, or 2) according to his promises.

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

We are to pray for those brethren who fall into sin, as long as they have not gone so far with God that he takes them home.

If the "sin unto death" refers to physical death, we need to be clear that person did not lose their salvation. Eternal security is clear throughout the Bible in other verses. But that God will chasten His children that turn aside is also a clear Biblical principle (Hebrews 12:5-8). God will call believers home early if they go too far: only He knows what that point is.

Examples would be Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11, and those Christians in Corinth that had partaken of the Lord's Supper "unworthily", and because of that were sick, "and many sleep", i.e. were dead (1 Corinthians 11:29-31).

5:18-19 - ¹⁸We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. ¹⁹And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

This is a repeat of 1 John 3:6,8,9 that we already studied. The phrase “we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” is a profound statement of the condition of all lost men’s hearts! But also the reason we need to separate from the world.

5:20-21 - ²⁰And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. ²¹Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Eternal life is in a person, the true God, Jesus Christ. To know Him is to receive Him. With that relationship with Him in mind, we are to keep ourselves from idols, which is anything that stands between Christ and the believer. As we have already studied in this class, covetousness is idolatry.

John Phillips wrote:

“An idol, of course, is not necessarily made of wood or stone. It may be anything that comes between the soul and God.”

Slide 18

And so ends the first epistle of John...

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

Slide 19 – Title Slide

Slide 20

I. WRITER: John, the son of Zebedee.

II. AUDIENCE: Personal note to the elect lady and her children (2 John 1)

III. DATE: 90 A.D.

Slide 21

Outline of 2 John

- I. A Word of Commendation (vv. 1–4)
- II. A Word of Command (vv. 5–6)
- III. A Word of Caution (vv. 7–11)
 - A. Danger from the deceiver (vv. 7–8)
 - B. Danger to the doctrine (v. 9)
 - C. Danger at the door (vv. 10–11)
- IV. A Word of Conclusion (vv. 12–13)

Slide 22

I. A Word of Commendation (vv. 1-4)

vv. 1-2 - ¹The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; ²For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

John identifies himself as "The elder". It usually refers to the office of the Pastor of a New Testament church, but a few times it can also signify someone who is in fact "old".

There is much disagreement over who John is writing to. He is either writing to a physical woman and her physical children, or the "elect lady" represents a local church, and her spiritual children or church members. I take the literal interpretation that he wrote to some godly Christian lady known to the aged apostle.

John starts out emphasizing the truth. If he is writing to a church, then he is stating that he loves this church "in the truth", and all those that know the truth also love it. True believers will have a love for God's church.

vv. 3-4 - ³Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. ⁴I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

In his old age, John's greatest joy was to hear that his converts were keeping pure doctrine and practicing it!

II. A Word of Command (vv. 5-6)

vv. 5-6 - ⁵And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. ⁶And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

He reiterates the commandment of Christ that the N.T. churches had from the beginning, that saints should love one another. And, in verse 6, that the love of God is manifested by obedience, walking after his commandments.

III. A Word of Caution (vv. 7-11)

A. Danger from the deceiver (vv. 7-8)

v. 7 - ⁷For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

The spirit of the antichrist is manifested first and foremost by denial of the incarnation and Deity of Christ. We can never forget the concept that "many deceivers" are entered into the world. We need to discern them and protect believers from them.

v. 8 - ⁸Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

What is John speaking about that we can lose? I think he is speaking of losing some of his reward. We do not lose our salvation if we slip with our doctrine or fellowship with deceivers: but we do lose our "reward".

B. Danger to the doctrine (v. 9)

v. 9 - ⁹Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

Abide means to "remain". Whoever does not remain in the doctrine of Christ, whoever apostasizes from the doctrine of Christ no longer has God.

C. Danger at the door (vv. 10-11)

vv. 10-11 - ¹⁰If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

This verse teaches separation from false teachers. The Bible is clear we are not to associate with them in any way. Why? Because to not separate is to condone, to be ok with it. What does it mean to bid them "God speed"? It means "be well".

Romans 16:17 - "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned: and avoid them."

2 Thessalonians 3:6 - "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."

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IV. A Word of Conclusion (vv. 12-13)

vv. 12-13 - ¹²Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. ¹³The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

John plans to see this special lady and her children or the church and explain things more fully to them at that time.

Slide 24

And so ends the second epistle of John...

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

Slide 25 – Title Slide

Slide 26

I. **WRITER:** John, the Son of Zebedee.

II. **AUDIENCE:** Personal note to Gaius (3 John 1)

Although there is a man named Gaius who traveled with the apostle Paul, most likely, this is a different Gaius who was a disciple of John.

III. **DATE:** 90 A.D.

Slide 27

Outline of 3 John

- I. The Virtuous Pastor (vv. 1–4)
- II. The Visiting Preacher (vv. 5–8)
- III. The Vainglorious Pope (vv. 9–11)
- IV. The Valued Partner (v. 12)
- V. The Vigilant Presbyter (vv. 13–14)

Slide 28

I. The Virtuous Pastor (vv. 1-4)

v. 1 - ¹The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

John once again refers to himself as "The elder" (referring to his office of Pastor, but maybe also his age). This epistle can give us insight into what was John's deepest concerns as he nears the end of his pilgrimage here on earth.

What gives John the most joy as he is about to depart from this life? After spending his entire life serving Christ, what concerns this man of God the most? **Truth!** "Whom I love in the truth". Gaius was sound in his doctrine. John calls him well-beloved four times.

v. 2 - ²Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

John makes it very clear that he wants Gaius to prosper. Does he mean only spiritually? I do not think so, because he states that Gaius' soul is already prospering. The Greek word means "to succeed in business affairs". John may also mean financially.

Money itself is not evil, but the love of it is (I Timothy 6:6-10). Perhaps John knew Gaius' heart, that he would only turn around and invest the financial increase in God's work. He was a very generous and hospitable man according to verses 5 and 6.

John mentions "be in health". This is another example of a saint who is right with God, but not in good health. It is obvious that poor health often has no correlation with spiritual condition or level of faith. God works with each of His children differently, and with some He chooses to allow physical affliction to mold their character.

vv. 3-4 - ³For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. ⁴I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

John has received reports of this church, and Gaius evidently has been reported to be walking in the truth. John delights to hear that his "children" are walking in truth. He goes so far as to say that "I have no greater joy" than when he hears that his converts are keeping pure doctrine and practicing it! The truth was being kept by the next generation. His fruit was still reproducing. Nothing seems to warm the heart of an old preacher more than to hear of a young preacher standing for the truth, especially if it is one of his own converts.

II. The Visiting Preacher (vv. 5-8)

vv. 5-7 - ⁵Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; ⁶Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: ⁷Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

John commends Gaius for his hospitality to the saints and to the lost. It is a clear Bible doctrine that we are to "as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." And especially to those saints involved in the great commission and the work of God. We are to be very compulsive about meeting the needs of those laboring in missions and evangelism.

v. 8 - ⁸We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

Helping those directly involved in the work of the great commission, we are "fellowhelpers to the truth". We are to all be involved in the work of the great commission, but also making certain that the needs of those more deeply involved are met.

III. The Vainglorious Pope (vv. 9-11)

v. 9 - ⁹I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

Diotrephes seemed to be in a position of power, even maybe a pastor of that church as they often had more than one pastor. Clearly, he wanted to run the church, and was jealous of John to the point that he went out of his way to not receive him.

We need to beware of this desire in all of us to want to be recognized, because it can quickly get out of control. Nothing stinks more than a man in a position of leadership who is insecure and concerned about maintaining his "authority".

v. 10 - ¹⁰Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

This insecure power-monger uses these methods:

- 1) "Prating against us with malicious words": lifting himself up by putting others down.
- 2) "Neither doth he himself receive the brethren": selfish, not willing to help others involved in God's work, because he wants all the recognition for himself.
- 3) "Forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church": fights out against those he perceives are "against" him.

v. 11 - ¹¹Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

John exhorts us to stay away from those like Diotrephes. Once again, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:16).

IV. The Valued Partner (v. 12)

v. 12 - ¹²Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Demetrius had a pagan name, so obviously was a Gentile, Roman convert. Perhaps he was one of the ones Diotrephes cast out of the church, or one of the evangelists that he refused to receive. John is giving Gaius his approval of Demetrius.

V. The Vigilant Presbyter (vv. 13-14)

vv. 13-14 - ¹³I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: ¹⁴But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

Once again, John has things he prefers to talk about in person when he arrives. John mentioned in verse 10 that he had tentative plans about coming to Gaius' church to set Diotrephes straight.

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And so ends the third epistle of John...