

“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”

1st John 4:7

First Love Ministries, Inc.

PRAYER STUDY #212

JOHN’S EPISTLES

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”

1st John 1:3

I have no doubt that the author of the Epistles of John was actually John the Apostle, although there is considerable disagreement about the authorship, and most modern scholars do not believe that John actually wrote these words. Nevertheless, these are some of the most powerful scriptures in the Bible. They are called letters or epistles, but 1st John has no salutation or closing greeting as typical of the letters in that day. It reads more like a sermon from a pastor who deeply loved his sheep. I

It is now thought that these were the last books written in the Bible, even though they are placed in the canonized Bible before the book of Jude and Revelation. This placement should not carry any weight as Job is considered the first Bible book written, and it is in the middle of the Bible. It is thought that John wrote these little books around 100 AD at the end of his life in Ephesus.

The first epistle of John deals primarily with the character of God, and emphasizes the love we should have for one another. He is Light (Chapters 1:1-2:2). He is Love (Chapters 2:3-4:21), and He is Life (Chapter 5). The second epistle has to do with truth, and John warns us about apostates, antichrists, and deceivers. John tells us here that love is expressed in the boundary of truth (1-6), false doctrines lead to evil deeds(7-11), and false teachers are not to be received by Christians(12-13). In the third epistle, John again presents truth as all-important. You are not to love the false teacher but walk in truth. This epistle has to do with walking out the truth, and emphasizes the life of three men: Gaius who is beloved and encouraged to extend hospitality to true teachers of the Word (1-5); Diotrephes who loves preeminence (9-11); and Demetrius who “has good report of all men and of the truth itself” (12-14).

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

There are three beginnings in scripture: the beginning of the Word, which really is no beginning because He has always existed (John 1); the beginning of creation (Genesis 1); and the beginning of Jesus' life on earth when Christ came into the world at Bethlehem (1st John 1). John was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. He is not speaking as one who is merely speculating on how things were. He has seen Jesus and heard Him and touched Him over and over.

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

The important thing is not how we walk but where we walk. We must walk in the presence of God and allow His Word to shine on our sinful hearts. The word *cleanseth* is in present tense. Therefore, the blood of Jesus is continually cleansing us from all sin. When you sin, you have not lost your salvation, but you have lost your fellowship with the Lord until you confess your sin and repent.

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

I do not believe we can reach perfection in this life. We are all sinners whether we admit it or not. We cannot bring ourselves up to the level of God. But we can confess our sins and know that He cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

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

If we do one thing-*confess our sins*-, God will do four things:

1. Be faithful to us
2. Be just to us
3. Forgive our sins
4. Cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

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

According to Finis Dake, there are 21 ways in John that we can know that we know Him:

1. **By personal fellowship** (1:3-7, 2:13);
2. **Fullness of joy in our hearts** (1:4);
3. **Keeping His commandments** (2:3, 3:22);

4. **Walking even as He walked** (2:6);
5. **Love of the brethren** (2:9-11, 3:10-23, 4:7-21, 5:1);
6. **Overcoming the world and Satan** (2:13-14, 5:4 & 18);
7. **Hatred of the world** (2:15-17);
8. **Being one with Christians** (2:19);
9. **Holy Spirit anointing** (2:20-27);
10. **Knowing the truth that sets free** (2:21; John 8:32-36);
11. **Acknowledging God and Christ** (2:22-25);
12. **Doing righteousness** (2:29; 3:7-10, 5:1-4 & 18);
13. **Purifying ourselves** (3:3);
14. **Being born again** (2:29, 3:9, 5:1-18);
15. **Cleansing from sin** (1:7-9, 3:5-10);
16. **Freedom from condemnation** (3:20-24);
17. **The indwelling Spirit** (3:24; 4:4 & 13);
18. **Faith** (2:23, 5:1 & 10);
19. **Confessing Christ** (4:14-15);
20. **Receiving Christ** (5:10-13, John 1:12);
21. **Answered prayer** (3:21-22, 5:14-15).

1st John 2:15-17: *Love 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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust of it, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*

John is not talking about the world God created nor about the people. He is talking about the world system that leaves God out and is in opposition to God and is run by Satan, the prince of this world. These three problem areas that he mentions—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—are the exact same three temptations that Satan tempted both Eve and Christ with. We have a choice to either obey the world system or to obey God. +

1st John 2:18: *Little children, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, by which we know that it is the last time.*

The prefix *anti* can mean *against something*, but it can also mean *instead of* or *an imitation of*. In John's day there were already many antichrists. The definition of an antichrist is *one who denies the deity of Christ*. The Antichrist at the end of the age will mostly likely resemble aspects of Christ. We must be very careful that we do not walk in deception.

1st John 3:2: *Beloved, now are we the children 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.*

We are not expecting to be or waiting to be, we *are* the children of God right now.

1st John 3:8: *He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

According to Rick Renner, the word for destroy in this verse is from the Greek word *luo*, which means to *untie* and *unloose* something. *Luo* is found in Luke 3:16 where John the Baptist says, "...But one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose...." It is the same word used to describe the *loosening*, *unraveling*, and *removal* of Lazarus' grave clothes in John 11:44 and the *taking away* of Paul's chains in Acts 22:30. In Revelation 5:2, *luo* has the meaning of *to break* or *to destroy*. Here Jesus says that Jesus is the only one worthy to *loose* or *break* the seals referred to in the book of Revelation. Therefore, Renner says this verse could be translated: "...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might untie people from all the works of the devil, unraveling Satan's hold on them---until the devil's works in people's lives are utterly destroyed and his hostages are set free." Setting people free from the enemy has always been one of Jesus' primary concerns, and it should be our concern too!

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

More and more we will see this scripture played out as the world becomes more and more wicked.

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

The biggest problem in the last days will be deception because so many false prophets will be prophesying. We must test every word by the scripture and not receive a word just because the prophet is a superstar.

1st John 4:4: *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

Remind yourselves everyday that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is in you and at your disposal 24 hours a day. You have no need to be

afraid and should not shrink back in shyness when facing the enemy. We are more than conquerors through Christ so we don't have to let the enemy walk all over us.

1st John 4:7-8: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.* Rick Renner comments on this verse, “Often atheist say, ‘Religion is an evil force. It is the main source of hatred and war in the world.’ But the majority of what is done in the name of religion has nothing to do with God. First John 4:8 declares that ‘...God is love.’ As the Source of love, God would never initiate the wars, the hatred, the bloodshed, or the conflicts that are so often performed in the name of religion. These various conflicts may be done in the name of religion, but they have nothing to do with God, for God is a Restorer, Redeemer, Savior, and Deliverer, and there is no darkness in Him at all.”

1st John 4:18: *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear...* One of the greatest revelations needed by the Church today is the revelation of God's love. His is the only perfect love. When we are assured of His love, we will find that we have no fear no matter what happens in the world.

1st John 4:19: *We love him, because he first loved us.* He loved us when we were unlovely, even though we were full of sin. Even then, He showed kindness, and His kindness was what led us to repentance.

1st John 5:7: *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.*

This is one of the clearest passages on the Trinity in the Bible. It is in opposition to the teachings of Jehovah Witnesses that Jesus was created by God as Michael the Archangel and later became Jesus. It also shoots down the belief of Mormons that Jesus is not God but a Son of God and is the brother of Satan.

1st John 5:21: *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.* Anything that stands between Christ and a believer is an idol. I would suggest that anything that gives us more excitement or takes more of our time is an idol. We have often said that the biggest idols in America are the human body, money, sports, and power.

2nd John 9-10: *Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hat not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed.*

According to J. Vernon McGee, the word *transgress* means *to go farther than is right* or *go to some extreme*. This is what has happened to most cults. They have some truth but go further than the Word in coming up with their doctrines. John is saying that the person who abides or remains in the doctrine of Christ and does not change has both the Father and the Son. John was writing this epistle to “the elect lady.” Apparently she was one who had means and perhaps entertained guests. John is warning her to not entertain those who do not have the doctrine of Christ. If you entertain a false teacher or support him, you are a partner with him.

3rd John 2: *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.* I believe the Lord wants us to prosper in all things, but especially in spiritual things. He does not want us to walk in a spirit of poverty, but He also does not want us to get caught up in the prosperity gospel, which focuses on things and money.

3rd John 4: *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

John had given his life for the Gospel. He had led many people to the Lord. He had taught truth and had stood against false doctrine. Here he is an old man and has great joy in knowing those he has disciplined and cared for are walking in truth. Walking in truth is perhaps the greatest thing you can do to honor those who are spiritual authorities over you.