

[Sunday, January 10, 2016] 1John Series, Introduction to the Book of 1John – Craig Thurman

### Introduction

#### The writer is John:

The instrumentality used of the Holy Spirit to write this letter was John. He is referred to as *the one whom Jesus loved*. (Jn.13.20; 20.2; 21.7; 21.20) Five books of the N.T. were written by him. In the order that they appear in the N.T. and the names that they are given therein, are the books, The Gospel According to St. John; The First Epistle General of John; The Second Epistle of John; The Third Epistle of John; and The Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine.

We know very little of this young man's life before our Lord Jesus called him to the apostolic office, other than that he was a fisherman with his brother, James, and his father, Zebedee; and partners with Peter and Andrew in the same vocation. (Mk.10.35; Lk.5.10) His mother's name is Salome. (Mt. 27.56, comp. Mk.15.40; 16.1) She it is that asked of the Lord that her sons, James and John, be granted to sit, one on his left, and the other on his right in His kingdom. (Mt.20.20, 21) For which request the rest of the apostles became indignant against James and John.

Note: Whenever James and John are mentioned, but for once (9.28), James' name is first, then John (13 times), 14 total times their names are paired together.

We do not know why, but our Lord Jesus gave surnames to some of the brethren when He called them to follow Him. To James and John He gave the surname, *sons of Boanerges*, which is interpreted *sons of thunder*. (Mk.3.17)

And finally, in the Book of Revelation of Jesus Christ, written by John, we read that he was on the Isle of Patmos. In this book we are told that he was here because of the Word of God and because of the testimony that he bore of his Lord Jesus Christ. (Re. 1.9) The Word of God takes us no further into the history of this beloved apostle. While we might embellish this biography somewhat with suppositions about his friendship or ministry alongside of Peter (Lk.9.28; 22.8; Acts 3.1; 3.3; 4.13; 8.14; Gal.2.9), or his family's social status having hired servants (Mk.1.20), or his special access into the palace of the high priest when Jesus was arrested (Jn.18.15), while Peter remained outside warming his hand on the fire, I think this is enough information to allow us to proceed into the next points to be considered to set the context.

#### The letter is written to those who are in the fellowship of a N.T. church:

The N.T. Scriptures can only be properly understood and applied when the believer joins to the fellowship of a church. Each book subsequent to the history of the gospels is written especially with a church or churches in mind. Sometimes the church or churches are expressly stated. (church, 1Co.1.2; 1Thes.1.1; churches, Gal.1.2 Re.1.11) At other times this is implicit, but just as true. (the term *saints* is **always** of the believer in a church relationship, Ephesians & Philipians) I maintain that the first general epistle of John is a church epistle. In this book we have the following statement:

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

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We miss a very serious point when we fail to understand who is being addressed by the letter. We ask the question, Who are these represented by the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun in the objective case, *us*, *They went out from us ...* etc? Now I ask, How can professed believers go out from something except that they were first within it? The truth is, they can't. It is understood that these are church-associated believers. That is they are baptized believers who have purposely joined themselves to one of the Lord's N.T. churches. This book is written, as all of the epistles are, from this viewpoint. Appreciating this context is vital for a proper understanding of those truths that are revealed in them.

Again, in 1Jn.3.24 it reads, *He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him*. The first things that might come to mind when we recall our Lord's commandments are probably, *love one another, love your neighbor, do good to those who persecute you, help the weak*, etc., but to that we cannot ignore Mt. 28.19, *Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...* Now, it is only the saints of the churches that can and will keep *all of His commandments*. Only organized baptized believers can and should do this. No other work is proper, and no other work will endure to the day of Christ.

**There are two great themes in the book of first John.** The predominate theme is *love*. The next is abiding. As a matter of fact love and abiding are used almost equally in John's gospel. (the verb *love*, 37; the verb, *abide*, 41) Love, in all its forms (noun, verb, and adjective), is found in John's gospel 44 times, but more than in any other book of the N.T. it is in this first epistle 51. Now, John's first mention of love comes in the famous verse of the Bible, Jo.3.16,

*Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

We know that Jesus Christ is God's love shown to us; that there is no greater love than this. Christ Jesus, God's only begotten Son, not only came to and lived among sinners in the likeness of men and in human flesh, but He gave His life for them; He died on the cross for them to remove the judgment of God for sin, to have them stand in His righteousness, and to give them eternal life with God.

*Joh 10:15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

*Joh 13:1 ... when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

These same persons which He died for and has given eternal life to are to show the same love to others, especially to one another. The Lord Jesus Himself gave this commandment to them:

*Joh 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

*Joh 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

But the following words truly captures the whole sense of the first epistle:

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*Jn.14.23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

This forms the crux of John's thought in this first epistle. Those who have received the love of God by Christ Jesus are to love one another, and in that is found the great comfort of God's abiding presence. For a lack of love will be a lack of the knowledge of His abiding presence. So, the foremost thought of John is, Do we know the love of God? The assurance of that is only found when we love one another.

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

**The next predominate thought of John's epistle is to mark the distinction between abiding and not abiding in Christ:**

The Greek root verb, μένω, meno, is translated in this letter by the English words *abide, remain, continue, and dwell*. It is also translated in the N.T. as *tarry, being present* (of Jesus being present with His disciples), *might stand* (that election *might stand*, not of works, but of Him that calls), and *endure*.

*2Th 1:4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure ...*

**Endure defines for us the sense of abiding, remaining, continuing, and dwelling in Christ.**

i.e. those *endured* a great fight of afflictions; ye have in heaven a better and *enduring* substance, our Lord *endured* the cross; we are to consider Him that *endured* such contradiction; we are to *endure* chastening; the word of the Lord *endureth*; we count them happy which *endure*, and consider the *patience* of Job; love *endures* all things.

The apostle John uses this verb, μένω, more than all of the other N.T. writers *combined*. In his gospel it is used 41 times; in the other letters 27 times; a total of 68 times; **all of the other books in the N.T. combined use this Greek verb 61 times**. To this it is very thought-provoking to me that John never uses the noun *patience* except in the book of the Revelation, which Greek work is a compound containing the root μένω, ὑπομένω. And John's use of the Greek word ὑπομένω, for *patience*, is used in Revelation more than in any other book of the N.T. Clearly John is communicating the need for the children of God to abide in Christ.

The Christian can and should abide in Christ. It is imperative for the Christian to abide in Christ if he will have the assurance of the abiding presence of God with them. In the great *comfort* chapter of the Bible, *Jo.14.1, Let not your heart be troubled, Jo.14.18; I will not leave you comfortless ...*

*Joh 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

Those who are in a church relationship but do not live for Christ, who will not apply Word of Christ to their daily lives are at best questionable professions, or worse yet, as John will reveal, shall be found to be liars and/or antichrists. Every member, without exception, should *strive* to live for Christ, continually struggling and agonizing against sin within and without.

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In 1John μένω is found 17 times. 17 is the number for victory. Also in this book, the Greek noun νικη and the verb νικάω, translated respectively *victory* and *overcome* are found seven times. Seven is the number for complete.

1Jo 5:4 For whatsoever

πᾶν τὸ, is translated *whatsoever, all that, the whole* (multitude, body), *every* (branch) *that, all the* (multitude, face, estate, fulness); Wuest, *everything*; **not whosoever: the idea is, what has been born, not who.**

is born

has been born, Wuest, γεγεννημένον, neut., sing., part., perf., pass. of γεννάω

of God overcometh

νικᾷ, 3<sup>rd</sup> p, pres., ind. of νικάω, overcomes, is overcoming

the world: and this is the victory (νίκη, noun)

that overcometh (νικήσασα, nom, sing., fem., part., aor. 1; perhaps *overcame*; meaning that *we have the victory*)

the world, even our faith.

Our faith evidences to us and others the truth of our reception of the incorruptible seed of God which is implanted in us at the new birth. We have the victory over the world by virtue of the redemptive price of Christ's shed blood. Because He lives we live.

The world on the other hand continues under the just sentence of God's wrath for sin.

5 Who is he that overcometh

νικῶν, nom., sing., masc., part., pres. of νικάω, is overcoming, overcomes

the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

To state this in the indicative, *He that overcometh the world is he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.*

It is as plain a statement as can be made about who has the victory of Christ over the world. Since the Lord Jesus died for sin, specifically died for the sins of His people, became sin for us, raised from the dead and presented Himself before God for us, and is made by God Himself our righteousness, then He not only made victory for us a possibility, He is our victory. And now we are partakers of the benefits of the life that is in Him.

The greatest obstacle, and I think that this is very thing that John would have us to know, for the Christian is not *knowing* the truth about the real Christian experience. A. T. Robertson said this in his introduction to the book of 1John, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p.200, in reference to the error

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that was affecting the saints of his day, that there are those 'who do not know how to think clearly.' That is a profound statement. Knowing the truth, that the Christian life is the single greatest struggle of all time, and knowing the Word of God is the means for preparing to abide in Christ. Not knowing the truth as a Christian is to be robbed of the very life's blood of the faith. The very thing that most Christians do not value as dearly as they should, knowing the truth of God's Word and being reminded of it again and again, is the very thing that contributes to a lifetime of depression, discouragement and confusion about both temporal and eternal and spiritual things. Think about this with me for a moment.

John's primary focus goes beyond the Christian offender. His concern is the behavior of the Christian offended; the one who has suffered the wrong. There is no greater opportunity for manifestation of the love of God than for when one of the saints of God suffers wrongfully at the hands of a fellow brother or sister. (1Pe.4.16) And there is probably no greater rebuke that can be given the offender than to receive a response of love from the one who has been wronged. Let's be honest here for a moment. We pretty much know when we offend someone. The real conviction is brought home when we see that brother or sister

In view of the constant enmity of the nature of our flesh and the powerlessness that we have to affect any change in it we might suppose that we have no victory at all. But quite to the contrary, abiding in Christ, *remaining diligent* against all inner and outer, *foreign and domestic* enemies is proof of our victory in Christ. An old brother said to me years ago, 'knowing the truth is half the battle.' In other words, what he meant was, all that remains, now that we know where the problem is, know what to look for, and what to do, is *doing* what needs to be done to combat it. And that is the truth. In spite of the contradictions, offenses, rubs, trials, losses, by the Word of God we are informed, we know what to expect and what to do to *continue in, abide in Christ*. It is not that we are to conquer the world, though we have overcome the world through Christ; it is not that our flesh will ever be changed from what it is, hateful and despicable, Job said, ***I loathe it***; Paul said *that in me dwelleth no good thing*; but we are to *remain* faithful to Christ and His Word. That doesn't mean that we are *perfect*, but *faithful*. We are *constantly abiding* in Christ.

*1Jn.2.4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* (This is a serious charge that should stir up anyone that might be in a state of spiritual lethargy.)

*5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him [this one] verily is the love of God perfected:*

τετελείωται, 3<sup>rd</sup> ps, sing., perf., ind., pass. of τελειόω; or, *in this one the love of God is perfected.*

The love of God cannot be perfected in us when we do not *continue* keeping His Word.

I have a bad habit. With a number of things that we did along the way while constructing our house there was something that I did. In all of it I was being perfected in carpentry. There were times, too many, that I did not know exactly how to do something as I needed to know. Normally, in such instances, a person would, say when drilling holes for installing knobs onto cabinets, pick a cabinet door which was not as conspicuous as the others to drill the first hole. That way if something doesn't go quite as planned the error won't be as visible. Then if there was something that needed correcting adjustments could be made and so the next knob, and the knob thereafter

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could be better. The whole process from beginning to end was being *perfected*. From the first hole drilled to the last I was being perfect in the *hole-drilling, knob-installing* exercise. We are perfected in the love of God with every instance of *keeping His Word*, from the first through to the last. But it takes what? Continuance, abiding, enduring, remaining in the Word of Christ. I can assure you that there are no successes without failures. But with every act of faith we are being perfected in the love of God.

*hereby* (a Greek phrase, ἐν τούτῳ, used 13 times in 1John; 13 the number for rebellion ... there isn't another way ...) *know we that we are in him*. (There is the confidence in the walk.)

By every act of faith we are further assured by the Father and the Son of our relationship to Him. That translates into a habitual walk with Christ. This one agonizes against the flesh, not quitting, but following after Christ no matter what comes. Remember Peter and the betrayal? Did he sin? Yes. Did he want to quit? Doubtless, he did. But the Lord worked repentance in his heart and strengthened him (Lk.22.32), and he began to walk, endure, continue, and not without other occasions of faltering. (Gal. 2.11) That is the reality of a faithful Christian walk. It is not that he does not or cannot sin, but that *the habit is not to continue in it, but rather to continue in Him*.

6 *He that saith he **abideth** (μένειν, pres., infinitive) in him ought*

ὀφείλει, 3ps, pres., ind. of ὀφείλω, to owe, to be indebted, in need; in the KJV, ὀφείλει, is used 11 times, and is translated *is ... debtor; guilty; ought; need; should; oweth*.

It is our debt, it is our necessity, our spiritual welfare is essentially bound to this; it is our ever-present duty for the love of Christ; we ought to walk, even as he walked.

*himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

And so we have an example:

1Jn.2.9 *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

10 *He that loveth his brother **abideth** in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

*occasion of stumbling, σκάνδαλον; Harold K. Moulton's Greek Lexicon to the N.T., a **trap-spring**, a stumbling-block, anything against which one stumbles, an impediment; KJV σκάνδαλον is translated as, Mt.13.41, and they (the angels) shall gather out of his kingdom **things that offend**; 16.23, thou art an **offence** unto me; 18.7, Woe unto the world because of **offences!** for it must needs be that **offences** come; Ro.14.13, that no man put (τίθημι, purpose, conceive) a stumblingblock [πρόσκομμα, stumbling] or an **occasion to fall** in his brother's way (that is, to put the mechanism in the way which would trip up our brother.);*

**Brethren who love one another will go to great lengths to order their lives so that they remove instances which might unnecessarily cause offense.**

*Re 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a **stumblingblock** before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

**In verse 9 there is a presumption of wrongdoing whether real or supposed.** Regardless of the reality or the supposed wrongdoing, for a brother (or sister) to hate is to walk in darkness. Hate, perhaps because it is the peculiar sin that crops up among brethren, cripples and stymies the life of a child of God in their fellowship with Christ and His people. So, God in His faithfulness to us will work to remove this darkness that has fallen upon the heart of one of His beloved children. This is not allowed to remain in the life of Christian, well; not and be counted faithful. Notice that it is not the wrongdoer that is brought to the forefront by John. It is the one that has as a result of some unknown offense that is being singled out for having hate against his brother. The truth is, the Lord works on both sides of this issue. But more powerful than the correction and repentance of a person having committed an offense, is the witness of one who has suffered the wrong and forgives it for Christ's sake.

*Col 3:25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.*

*1Pe.4.15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*

*16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*

*1Pe 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*

We are to continue, not in self-determination with the darkness remaining, but in the will of God walking in the Light of life. We learn to live and become better equipped against being *tripped up* by others' actions or inactions. In this the love of God is perfected in us.

There are things, and these things we all do, that can trip us up that we do to others, and that others do to us.

*Mt.18.7 ¶ Woe unto the world because of offences! (since the offenses [have come]) for it must needs be that offences come (it is a necessity the offenses come); but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*

The offenses are real and we must learn to react to them according to the Word of God or else we are going to spend all of our days in a miserable condition. We are miserable in ourselves and miserable company for others. And the only remedy is to *continue* to *abide* in the light; yield to the Master so that He may apply the healing balm of His Word upon our hearts and minds. Our only recourse is to the Word of God. Our only joy is when we have subjected ourselves to the will of God.

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1Jn.3. 6 *Whosoever **abideth** in him sinneth not:*

Not meaning that there is the possibility of sinless perfection in this present life, but rather that the nature to sin is trumped by the habit to walk in the light of Christ.

*whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

What? This is not saying that we all fall from grace when we sin. But this does address the unmitigated walk in darkness. For professing Christians of this sort the Holy Spirit reveals a life that is a lie. Grace changes lives. Grace makes children who continue in sin the most miserable of creatures on the earth, and those who abide in Christ among the most joyful and confident. The profession of one who has no godly sorrow for sin is false.

So, there are three people John writes about; those whose lives have never been touched by the grace of God; those who have been touched but who are not abiding; and those who have been touched and whose will it is, that no matter what comes, they abide faithful in Christ.

Christians need to be teachable. They should have an insatiable desire to want to learn the Word of God for themselves, and apply the truth of the Word of God to themselves. Doctrine does matter. Practice matters. We ought to want to know every doctrine that our Lord teaches through His Word. These tabernacles, meaning this corporate church and this, my personal body, are to be ordered according to the pattern shown to us in God's Holy Word. Doctrine without practice is cold, hard, legal letter. Practice without doctrine is undisciplined, unchaste, rebellious and dishonoring living. The doctrine is Christ's; the manner of life is Christ's. We are to receive both with reverence and faith.

The Lord willing we begin our study into the book of 1John next time.