

So That You May Know

An Expository Journey through **1John**

Chapter 1- An Introduction to **1John**

4. An Introduction to **1John** Part 4

WAOY Thursday 04/05/07; WOSM Tuesday 09/30/08; Thursday 10/06/22

Welcome again, my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse “journey” through the Epistle of **1John**, and today, we are continuing to go over the Introduction of this great Epistle.

Now on the last broadcast, I was giving you the parameters that I will be following on this new Study on **1John**. And today, I want to touch on the main thrust of what John says in this great Epistle.

For some reason, the Apostle John is called, “The beloved Disciple”, and I find that strange for a number of reasons. There is no doubt that John, like all of the Apostles of the Lord were men who were indeed bathed in the Love of God- that is true- but to stress this quality in John to the exclusion of all the other qualities is interesting. For example- it was Paul- not John who wrote **1Corinthians 13**, which is the chapter which speaks more about Love than almost any chapter in the entire Bible- so do not think that John was captivated by one aspect over another.

Many people also tend to think of John as a very dainty and soft man but nothing could be further from the truth. The only place that I can think of that gives any credibility to this notion is the famous painting of the Last Supper by Leonardo DaVinci, which shows John with almost feminine characteristics.

In reality, before Jesus met him, John was a fisherman by trade. And along with James, his brother, John was known as the “Sons of Thunder”- probably due to their explosive temper; their tendency to violence or both.

But John is familiar to us because beside Dr. Luke and the Apostle Paul, John wrote more of the Books of the New Testament than any other person. During his lifetime, John wrote a Gospel account; three Epistles; and The Book of the Revelation. But aside

from what John wrote about himself in his Books, we know very little about this man. But through his Gospel- we can see just how John viewed Christ; from his Epistles, we can see how John viewed the Church; and from his Vision of the Revelation of Jesus- we can see just how John viewed the future.

Both history and the Bible tells us that John played a major role in the development of the early Christian Church. And although John was not the major player of the group, he was a member of Jesus' inner circle of disciples- the others being Peter- who was the leader and James- John's brother.

John was the younger brother of James, and it was Peter- not John who was the key man in the early days of the Church- although John did have his turn as a leader later on. John outlived all of the Apostles and he was used by God to fill a huge gap in the Church toward the end of the first century after both Peter and Paul were martyred.

When we try to examine John's personality and character- the search always leads us back to his brother James- as John shared much of his older brother's temperament. John with James were known as the "Sons of Thunder". John was also with James as they both wanted to call fire down from Heaven against the Samaritans. And John as also right in the middle of the debate about which of them was going to be the greatest.

So we can see that although John became a humble and loving man of God in his later years- his earlier years were filled with arrogance; pride; hostility; violence; and huge sweeps of emotion which even included vengeance and anger.

Love was a quality that John *learned* from Jesus Christ- because he was not naturally a loving man. In fact, the only reference to words that John spoke in the other Gospels, reveals a man who is full of aggressive, self- assurance and intolerance.

John was very impulsive and quick to size up a situation- and like the rest of the disciples, when John did say something- he was oftentimes wrong. The only reference that Mark gives John with words that John spoke alone is in **Mark 9:38**, when John told Jesus that he rebuked a man for casting out demons in Jesus' Name because the man was not a part of their group. Jesus rebuked John for saying that.

So when we really examine this great man of God- we find that John was like many of us- brash; rude; quick to judge; hot tempered; vengeful; violent; aggressive; passionate; zealous; and had a very troubling dose of personal ambition. In other words- John was a sinner saved by Grace. And none of these qualities helped him in ministry. All of these personal characteristics were sinful and had to be fought and overcome through the Spirit. And as evidenced by his last writing and what history says about John- he was successful in yielding himself to God and of dying to self so much that he is known today as the great man of love and mercy that he did finally become.

I say all of this to show you that Jesus didn't pick men because they were already good before they came to Christ- no, some of the men that Jesus chose were worse off than others around them. Jesus handpicked these men and John precisely because after Christ had washed them and saved them- they *learned* to love the Lord and they were willing to do what it took to become what God called them to be.

John was truly a great example to us today. And as John aged- every single one of his weaknesses became his strengths. When we think about John today, we normally picture an aged man with white hair who calls other believers, "little children". As the last living Apostle, John was loved and respected and even revered for his great devotion to Jesus and his faithful preaching and teaching of the Gospel near the close of the first century.

But as we will see in our study- John's great love in no way diminished his zeal and passion for Truth. John believed and taught that Truth was objective- not subjective. John believed and taught that the Gospel must be learned rightly and preached fully and that any variation to the Gospel was heresy. And John, like Paul and all the other Apostles rightly understood that it is the responsibility of the leaders of the Church to call out a false teacher and to clearly identify false Doctrine when it is brought forth. John was brutal against those who sought to pervert the right way of the Lord, giving instructions like this one that we find in **2John 10&11**:

10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting;

11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

And like this one that we can find in **1John 2:22**:

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

So as I shared with you in our “**Journey through Jude**”- even though many of us today want to crawfish about our responsibility to maintain Sound Doctrine in the Church- John didn’t join in with that crowd- and he would rebuke us today for our apathy about this issue if he were here.

John’s great passion for Truth shaped everything that he wrote. To John everything was black or white- nothing was gray. He thinks and writes using words and phrases that bring us to absolutes- not concerning himself with who this might offend.

To John, words meant specific things. Christianity was clear; the Gospel was propositional and objective; Truth was constant and absolute, and Jesus was God Almighty wrapped in human flesh.

Over and over John tells us about the Deity of Jesus. While he did write about Jesus’ humanity- more than any other Book in the Bible- John was inspired by God to bring to us the great and glorious mystery that Jesus was God.

John wrote in what is called, contrasts. In his writings, John set light against darkness; the Kingdom of God against the kingdom of the devil; the children of God against the children of satan; the judgment of the righteous versus the judgment of the wicked; the resurrection of life against the resurrection of damnation; receiving Christ against rejecting Christ; fruit against fruitlessness; obedience against disobedience; and love against hate. Truly we can see that John completely understood the necessity of drawing a clear line between that which is holy and that which is profane.

In this first Epistle that we are going to study, John is faithful to draw a line between those who are serving Christ and those who are deceived. He tells us that we are either walking in the light or else we are walking in darkness. In **1John 3:9** John says that if we are born of God we do not sin- yea that we *cannot* sin. In **1John 4:4&5**, John says that we are either “of” the world or we are “of” God- but that we cannot be both. In **1John 4:7&8**- John says that if we love we are born of God- but if we do not love we are not born of God. John uses some of the strongest terms in the entire Bible- like **1John 3:6** which says:

No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him

John wrote many verses like this without apology and without softening any of the hard lines. And while many today in the modern Church try to minimize these verses or explain them away- I won't be doing that in this study. Lord willing, I will be taking each verse and looking at it in the very same way that John wrote it so that we may get a true and clear picture about just what the Holy Spirit inspired John to write. After all- none of us has the right to explain a verse away or to say that it doesn't mean what it says.

Now 1st John was written as a sort of test so that people can see if they are truly saved or if they are only deceived about their own Salvation. So all through **1John**- the Apostle gives us ten separate tests that reveals what a genuinely saved person should believe and how a truly saved person should behave.

For example- in his second Epistle, John cried out for a total and complete separation of God's people from all that is false and untrue. Look with me at verse 9 of **2John**:

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

Now while it is true that I didn't have anything to do with that verse being written- I do believe with all my heart that that verse is inspired and infallible and inerrant and is part of the only Book that God gave to man so it behooves me to not throw it away or to marginalize it – but to study it and learn what it means and to honor it and love it and defend it against all men who would try to change it.

John is just that black and white and so should we. Now while it is true that John knows full well that believers can and do sin- John doesn't belabor that point because he was much more interested with the *overall pattern* of a person's life. John was passionate about making sure that his readers understand that righteousness- not sin- is the dominant principle in a true born again believer's life. And to teach anything else- John said- was a lie.

The way that John wrote reveals much about his own personality. Truth was John's main goal in life- it was his highest reach. He spoke in black and white terms without wasting time

coloring in a little gray. Although John was a warm and personable man- when he wrote- it was straight and to the point. Sometimes John's writings are not soothing at all and we may need to read other complimentary verses from other writers at times to balance things out- but we must all agree that John was an Apostle and that he was genuinely inspired to write these words down. And what he wrote reflects his deep abiding respect and love for the Truth.

We might be tempted to think that a person like John would be a radical or a nut case or someone who lived and operated on the fringe because of what he wrote- but what do we do with the fact that what he wrote came from the very Mind and Heart and Mouth of Almighty God and that John did not originate these words?

So we are forced to read these words because God gave them to us through John. And because these words are not the words of a fanatic- but because they are words of an Apostle of Jesus Christ- we need to read them; and we need to take the time to investigate what they mean and then we all need to humbly submit ourselves to their Divine Authority.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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