

# 1 JOHN

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN

The author of this epistle was John, the son of Zebedee, the disciple whom Jesus loved: he was the youngest of the apostles, and survived them all. He does not indeed put his name to this epistle, as the Apostles Paul, Peter, James, and Jude do to theirs; and it is easy to observe, that when this disciple, in his writings, had any occasion to speak of himself, it was usually by such a circumlocution, as the disciple whom Jesus loved, or the other disciple, studiously concealing his name: so that his not putting his name to this epistle need not create any scruple about his being the author of it, which everywhere breathes the temper and spirit of this great apostle; and whoever compares this epistle, and the Gospel written by him, together, will easily conclude it to be his, both from the style and subject matter of it: besides, as Eusebius asserts <sup>f1</sup>, this epistle was generally received without scruple, both by ancient and modern writers. It is called “general”, because it was not written and sent to any particular church, or person, and not because it was for the general use of the churches, for so are all the particular epistles but because it was written to the Christians in general, or to the believing Jews in general wherever they were; for that it was written to the Jews seems evident from (~~600B~~1 John 2:2). It was called, by some of the ancients, the epistle of John to the Parthians <sup>f2</sup>; by whom must be meant not the natives of Parthia but the Jews professing to believe in Christ, who dwelt in that empire. We read of Parthian Jews at the feast of Pentecost, (~~400B~~Acts 2:9), who at that time might be converted, and, upon their return to their own country, lay the foundation of a Gospel church state there Dr. Lightfoot <sup>f3</sup> conjectures from a passage in (~~600B~~3 John 1:9) that this epistle was written to the Corinthians; but there does not seem to be any sufficient reason for it. As for the time when, and place where, this epistle was written, it is not easy to say: some think it was written at Patmos, whither the apostle was banished in the reign of Domitian, and where he wrote the book of the Revelations; (see ~~600B~~Revelation 1:9); and here some say he wrote his Gospel, and this epistle, and that a little before

the destruction of Jerusalem, and which he calls the last time or hour; and that his design in writing it was to exhort the believing Jews, either in Parthia, or scattered about in other countries, to brotherly love, and to warn them against false Christs and false prophets, which were now gone forth into the world to deceive men; (see <sup><6128></sup>1 John 2:18 4:1). Others think that it was written by him, when a very old man, after his return from his exile to Ephesus, where he resided during his life, and where he died, and was buried. It is called his “first” epistle general, not that it is the first general epistle, for the other two are written to particular persons, but is the first he wrote, and which is general: the occasion, and manifest design of it, is to promote brotherly love, which he enforces upon the best principles, and with the strongest arguments, taken from the love of God and Christ, from the commandment of Christ, and its being an evidence of regeneration, and the truth and glory of a profession of religion: and also to oppose and stop the growth of licentious principles, and practices, and heretical doctrines. The licentious principles and practices he condemns are these, that believers had no sin in them, or need not be concerned about it, nor about their outward conversation, so be they had but knowledge; and these men boasted of their communion with God, notwithstanding their impieties; and which were the sentiments and practices of the Nicolaitans, Gnostics, and Carpocratians. The heresies he sets himself against, and refutes, are such as regard the doctrine of the Trinity, and the person and office of Christ. There were some who denied a distinction, of persons in the Trinity, and asserted there was but one person; that the Father was not distinct from the Son, nor the Son from the Father; and, by confounding both, tacitly denied there was either, as Simon Magus, and his followers; regard is had to these in (<sup><6122></sup>1 John 2:22 5:7) and others, as the unbelieving Jews, denied that Jesus was the Messiah, or that Christ was come in the flesh; these are taken notice of in (<sup><6122></sup>1 John 2:22 4:2,3 5:1). Others, that professed to believe in Jesus Christ, denied his proper deity, and asserted he was a mere man, and did not exist before he took flesh, of the virgin, as Ebion and Cerinthus; these are opposed in (<sup><6100></sup>1 John 1:1,2 3:16 5:20). And others denied his real humanity, and affirmed that he was a mere phantom; that he only had the appearance of a man, and assumed human nature, and suffered, and died, and rose again in show only, and not in reality; of which sort were the followers of Saturninus and Basilides, and which are confuted in (<sup><6100></sup>1 John 1:1-3). This epistle is, by Clemens Alexandrinus <sup>f4</sup>, called his “greater” or “larger epistle”, it being so in comparison of the other two that follow.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN 1

In this chapter the apostle gives a summary of the Gospel, and the evidence of it, and from thence presses to a holy life and conversation, The sum of the Gospel is Jesus Christ, who is described both as God and man; his deity is expressed by being that which was from the beginning, the Word of life, life, and eternal life; his humanity by being the life manifested in the flesh, of which the apostles had full evidence by the several senses of seeing, hearing, and handling, and so were capable of bearing witness to the truth thereof, (~~GEN~~ 1 John 1:1,2). And the ends had in view in giving this summary, evidence, and testimony, were, that the saints wrote unto might have fellowship with the apostles, whose fellowship was with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and that their joy on hearing these things might be full, (~~GEN~~ 1 John 1:3,4). And the amount of the message declared by them was, that God is light, or a pure and holy Being, and that there is no darkness of sin, or unholiness in him; wherefore all such that pretend to communion with him, and live a sinful course of life, are liars; only such have fellowship with him, and with his Son, whose blood cleanses them from all sin, who live holy lives and conversations, (~~GEN~~ 1 John 1:5-7), not, that it is to be expected that men should be clear of the being of sin in this life, only that they should, as often as they sin, be humbled for it, and confess it before God, who will forgive them, and cleanse them from all unrighteousness; but as for those who affirm they have no sin in them, or any done by them, they are self-deceivers, the truth of grace is not in them, nor the word of God, and they make him a liar, (~~GEN~~ 1 John 1:8-10).

**Ver. 1.** *That which was from the beginning, &c.*] By which is meant not the Gospel, as if the apostle's design was to assert the antiquity of that, and clear it from the charge of novelty; for though that is called the word, and the word of life, and is the Spirit which gives life, and is the means of quickening dead sinners, and brings the report of eternal life and salvation by Christ, yet the seeing of it with bodily eyes, and handling it with corporeal hands, do not agree with that; but Jesus Christ is here intended, who in his divine nature was, really existed as a divine person, as the

everlasting Jehovah, the eternal I AM, which is, and was, and is to come, and existed “from the beginning”; not from the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel by John only, for he was before the Gospel was preached, being the first preacher of it himself, and before John was; yea, before the prophets, before Abraham, and before Adam, and before all creatures, from the beginning of time, and of the creation of the world, being the Maker of all things, even from everlasting; for otherwise he could not have been set up in an office capacity so early, or God's elect be chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and they have grace and blessings given them in him before the world began, or an everlasting covenant be made with him; (see ~~BOOK~~ John 1:1);

*which we have heard*; this, with what follows, proves him to be truly and really man; for when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, the apostles heard, and saw, and handled him; they not only heard a voice from heaven, declaring him to be the Son of God, but they often heard him speak himself, both in private conversation with them, and in his public ministry; they heard his many excellent discourses on the mount, and elsewhere, and those that were particularly delivered to them a little before his death; and blessed were they on this account, (~~BOOK~~ Matthew 13:16,17);

*which we have seen with our eyes*: with the eyes of the body, with their own, and not another's; and they saw him in human nature, and the common actions of life he did, as eating, drinking, walking, &c. and his many miracles; they saw him raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, restore sight to the blind, cause the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, and the deaf to hear; and they saw him transfigured on the mount. John was one that was present at that time, and saw his glory, as he also was when he hung upon the cross, and saw him bleeding, gasping, and dying there; they saw him after his resurrection from the dead, he showed himself to them alive, and was seen of them forty days; they saw him go up to heaven, and a cloud receiving him out of their sight:

*which we have looked upon*; wistly and intently, once and again, and a thousand times, and with the utmost pleasure and delight; and knew him perfectly well, and were able to describe exactly his person, stature, features, and the lineaments of his body:

*and our hands have handled of the Word of life*; as Peter did when Jesus caught him by the hand on the water, when he was just ready to sink; and as this apostle did, when he leaned on his bosom; and as Thomas did, even

after his resurrection, when he thrust his hand into his side; and as all the apostles were called upon to see and handle him, that it was he himself, and not a spirit, which has not flesh and bones as he had. Now as this is said of Christ, the Word of life, who is so called, because he has life in himself, as God, as the Mediator, and as man, and is the author of life, natural, spiritual, and eternal, it must be understood as he, the Word, is made manifest in the flesh; for he, as the Word, or as a divine person, or as considered in his divine nature, is not to be seen nor handled: this therefore is spoken of the Word, or of the person of Christ, God-man, with respect to his human nature, as united to the Logos, or Word of God; and so is a proof of the truth and reality of his human nature, by several of the senses.

**Ver. 2.** *For the life was manifested*, &c.] That is, the Word of life, who is life itself, the fountain of life, having it as God, in and of himself, without derivation from, and independent of another, originally and eternally, and who is the cause, author, and giver of life in every sense to others; this living God, who from all eternity was invisible, was in the fulness of time manifested in human nature; (see <sup><B114></sup>John 1:14 <sup><S16></sup>1 Timothy 3:16 <sup><B115></sup>John 3:8).

*And we have seen [it]*; as before with the eyes of their bodies:

*and bear witness*; for they were both eye and ear witnesses of the Word, and of the truth of his incarnation, and bore a faithful record to his proper deity, and real humanity:

*and show unto you that eternal life*; Jesus Christ, the true God, and eternal life, as in (<sup><B116></sup>1 John 1:5:20); so called, because he has everlasting life in himself; as he is the living God, and because he has eternal life for all his people; not only the purpose and promise of it are in him, but the thing itself; and it is in his power and gift to bestow it on all the Father hath given to him, and to them he does give it. The beginning of it lies in the knowledge of him, and the consummation of it will be in the lasting vision and enjoyment of him:

*which was with the Father*; that is, which life, eternal life, and Word of life, was from the beginning, or from all eternity with God the Father; which phrase is expressive of the eternal existence of Christ, as the Word and Son of God, with his Father, his relation to him, his oneness in nature, and equality with him, and his personal distinction from him; (see <sup><B117></sup>John 1:1);

*and was manifested unto us*; in human nature, as before observed, and that to the apostles, as he was not to the patriarchs and prophets; for though they saw him in promise, in prophecy, in type, and figure, and he sometimes appeared in an human form for a short time to them, yet they did not see him incarnate, in actual union with human nature; nor had they him dwelling among them, and conversing with them, as the apostles had; this was an happiness peculiar to them.

**Ver. 3.** *That which we have seen and heard*, &c.] This is repeated, both to confirm and illustrate what had been before said, and to carry on the discourse to what follows:

*declare we unto you*; in the ministry of the word; the person and offices of Christ being the sum and substance of the Gospel ministrations, that declares him to be the true God and eternal life, God over all, blessed for ever; and truly man, made of a woman, and made under the law; and to be the only Mediator between God and man, to be prophet, priest; and King, and to be the alone Saviour and Redeemer: this declares the greatness and excellency of his salvation, what an able, proper, and suitable Saviour he is; and what precious promises and spiritual blessings are in him, even all grace and eternal glory. And this declaration of him is made in the Gospel, for the following ends and purposes,

*that ye also may have fellowship with us*; in hearing, seeing, and handling of Christ in a spiritual sense; and by enjoying the same privileges in God's house and family, the same ordinances and spiritual provisions; joining and partaking with them in all the immunities and advantages of a Gospel church state here; and by being with them to all eternity hereafter.

*And truly our fellowship [is] with the Father*; the Father of Christ, the covenant God and Father of his people; and which they have with him, when under the influence and witnessings of the spirit of adoption, and can in the strength of faith call him their Father, draw nigh to him through Christ as such, and are indulged with his presence, and the discoveries of his love:

*and with his Son Jesus Christ*; being in union to him, they become partakers of him, and of his blessings; they receive out of his fulness, and grace for grace; they are admitted to an intimacy and familiarity with him; they are had into his chambers of secret retirement; they are brought into his banqueting house, where his banner over them is love, and where he

supps with them, and they with him; and into this fellowship are they called by the grace of God, through the Gospel; as also they have fellowship with the blessed Spirit, though not here mentioned; (see ~~47134~~ 2 Corinthians 13:14).

**Ver. 4.** *And these things write we unto you, &c.*] Concerning the deity and eternity of Christ, the Word and concerning the truth of his humanity, and the manifestation of him in the flesh; and concerning that eternal life and salvation which is declared in the Gospel to be in him; and concerning the saints' fellowship one with another, and with God the Father, and with Jesus Christ:

*that your joy may be full*; meaning either their spiritual joy in this life, which has Christ for its object, and is increased by the consideration of his proper deity, his incarnation and mediation by a view of free justification by his righteousness, and atonement by his blood; by a sight of his glorious person by faith, and by intimate communion with him, and a discovery of his love, which passeth knowledge: and which joy, when it is large, and very great, may, in a comparative sense, be said to be full, though not absolutely so, and being as much as can well be enjoyed in this state; and nothing can more contribute to it than a declaration of the above things in the Gospel, and an experimental acquaintance with them, and enjoyment of them: or else it may intend the joy of the saints in the world to come, in the presence of Christ, where are fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore; and so may express the ultimate glory and happiness of God's people, which is the chief end, as of his purposes, promises, and covenant, so of the Gospel, and the declaration of it. The Syriac version renders it, "that our joy, which is in you, may be full"; it is the joy of the ministers of the word, when the saints are established in the faith of Christ's person and offices, and have communion with him, with which view they declare him, and bear record of him. Some copies read, our joy.

**Ver. 5.** *This then is the message, &c.*] Of God by his Son the Word, or from Christ by his apostles. The Syriac version renders it, "this is the Gospel"; which is good news from a far country, a message sent from the King of kings to sinful men: or this is the annunciation, or declaration; that is, the thing declared, or showed. Some render it, "this is the promise", that whereas God is light, such who walk in the light shall have communion with him, and others shall not:

*which we have heard of him*; of Christ, who has declared him, that he is light without any mixture of darkness; that is a pure Spirit, and must be worshipped in a spiritual way; and that only spiritual worshippers are such as he seeks, and admits to communion with him. Moreover, they might hear and learn this of Christ, by his telling them that he himself was light, who is the image of the invisible God, insomuch, that he that has seen the Son, has seen the Father also. Wherefore, if the one is light, the other must be likewise; nor is there any coming to the Father, and enjoying communion with him, but through Christ; all which our Lord told his disciples. The Ethiopic version reads, “which ye have heard”, very wrongly; for the words regard the apostles, who made a faithful declaration of the message they heard, and had from Christ, which is as follows:

*and declare unto you that God is light*; that is, God the Father, as distinguished from “him”, Christ, of whom they had heard this message, and from Jesus Christ his Son, (~~GENE~~ 1 John 1:7), what is declared of him, agreeably to the report of Christ, is, that he is “light”; that is, as light is opposed to the darkness of sin; he is pure and holy in his nature and works, and of such pure eyes as not to behold iniquity; and so perfectly holy, that angels cover their faces before him, when they speak of his holiness: and as light is opposed to the darkness of ignorance, he is wise and knowing; he knows himself, his own nature, being, and perfections, his Son and Spirit, and their distinct modes of subsisting; he sees clearly all things in himself, all things he could do, or has determined shall be done; he has perfect knowledge of all creatures and things, and the darkness and the light are alike unto him, nor can the former hide from him: he is knowable, and to be discerned; he is clothed with light, and dwells in it; he may be known by the works of creation and providence; even the invisible things of him, his eternal power and Godhead, may be clearly seen and understood by them, and especially in his word, and most clearly in his Son; it is owing to the darkness of men, and not to any in and about God, who is light, that he is so little known as he is: and, like the light, he illuminates others; he is the Father of lights, the author and giver of all light; of the light of reason to men in general; and of grace here, and glory hereafter, to his own people, which are both signified by light; in whose light they see light; and he refreshes and delights their souls with the light of his countenance now, and with his glorious presence in the other world:

*and in him is no darkness at all*; no darkness of sin; nothing is more contrary to him, or more distant from him: nor any darkness of error and

ignorance; what is unknown to men, as the times and seasons; what angels were ignorant of, and even Christ, as man, as the day and hour of Jerusalem's destruction, were known to the Father; in him is no ignorance of anything whatever; nor is there any variableness or shadow of turning in him, as there is in the luminous body of the sun; but God is always the same pure and holy, wise and knowing Being. It is usual with the Cabalistic Jews<sup>f5</sup>, to call the supreme Being *rwa*, light the most simple light, hidden light, and infinite light, with respect to his nature, glory, and majesty, and with regard also to his grace and mercy, justice and judgment; though, as R. Sangart says<sup>f6</sup>, this is to be understood of him figuratively.

**Ver. 6.** *If we say that we have fellowship with him, &c.*] The Alexandrian copy reads, “for if we say”: that is, if any profess to be partakers of the divine nature, to be like unto God, and to have communion with him, to have the light of his countenance, and the discoveries of his love:

*and walk in darkness*; in the darkness of sin, ignorance, and unbelief, or are in a state of unregeneracy and blindness; whose understandings are darkened, and they know not God in Christ, nor have any true sight and sense of themselves, their sin and danger; and are ignorant of Christ and his righteousness, and the way of salvation by him; and are strangers to the Spirit of God, and the work of his grace; and are unacquainted with the truths of the Gospel; and not only so, but go on in darkness more and more; prefer it to the light, love it, and the works of it; have fellowship with them, and choose them; take pleasure in the ways of sin and wickedness, and continue, and walk on in them; if such persons pretend to fellowship with God, they are liars:

*we lie*; it cannot be, it is a contradiction, the thing is impossible and impracticable; what communion hath light with darkness? or what fellowship can the throne of iniquity, or those in whom sin reigns, have with God? for God is light, and were they partakers of him, or like unto him, or had communion with him, they would consequently be in the light, and not in darkness, and much less walk in it; wherefore they are liars,

*and do not the truth*: they do not say the truth, nor act according to it; they do not act uprightly or sincerely, but are hypocrites, and pretend to that which they have not; and if they did the truth, they would come to the light, and not walk in darkness; (see ~~REB~~ John 3:21).

**Ver. 7.** , &c.] Are persons enlightened by the Spirit of God, so as to have a true sight and sense of sin, to know Christ,

on and increasing in spiritual light and knowledge; walk on in Christ, the light, by faith, and in the light and truth of the Gospel, and as becomes it,

marvellous light:

*as he is in the light*

itself, is in it, and dwells in it. This “as” denotes not equality, but likeness: when this is the case, then it is a clear point, that

; not with the saints, with the apostles, and other Christians, but with God: “we have mutual communion”, as the

read, “with him”, as in ~~(ROM)~~

requires; and agreeably to this the Ethiopic version renders it, “and we are

appear to be like him, and partake of his nature, and have communion with him; and not only so, but with his Son Jesus Christ, as appears from our

*and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin:* there is a

internal, and is such that nothing can remove but the blood of Christ; not ceremonial ablutions and sacrifices, nor moral duties, nor evangelical

baptism, which is not the putting away the flesh of the flesh; nor even the graces of the Spirit, no, not faith, no otherwise than as it has to do with

that more properly belongs to the Spirit of God, and besides, does not cleanse from all sin; for notwithstanding this, sin is in the saints: but either

justification from it by his blood, which is put for both his active and passive obedience, the one being finished in the other; or rather of the

blood to the conscience, which purges it from dead works, and which has a continued virtue in it for that purpose. Christ's blood, being applied by the

and was of this use, even before it was actually shed, to the Old Testament

saints; whence Christ is said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and it has the same efficacy now as when first shed, and will have to the end of the world; and being sprinkled upon the conscience, by the Spirit of God, it takes away the sins of believers, and cleanses from them, as fast as the corruption of nature rises, or sins appear; and removes them out of their sight, and speaks peace to their souls; and which is owing, as to the dignity of Christ's person and the value of his sacrifice, so to his continual intercession, advocacy, and mediation; and which reaches to all sin, original and actual, secret and open sins; sins of heart, thought, lip, and life; sins of omission and commission, greater or lesser sins, committed against light and knowledge, grace and mercy, law and Gospel, all but the sin against the Holy Ghost; and in this Christ was the antitype of the scape goat, of which the Jews say <sup>f7</sup>, that

“it atoned for all the transgressions of the law, whether small or great, sins of presumption, or of ignorance, known, or not known, which were against an affirmative or negative command, which deserved cutting off (by the hand of God), or death by the sanhedrim.”

The Arabic and Ethiopic versions render it, “from all our sins”; and this must be ascribed to the greatness of his person, as the Son of God; wherefore the emphasis lies on these words, “his Son”: the Son of God, who is equal with God, and is truly and properly God: as it must be the blood of man that must, according to the law, be shed, to atone for and expiate sin, and cleanse from it, and that of an innocent man, who is holy, harmless, and without sin; so it must not be the blood of a mere man, though ever so holy, but the blood of one that is God as well as man; (see ~~Acts~~ Acts 20:28). The divine nature of the Son of God, being in union with the human nature, put virtue into his blood to produce such an effect, which still continues, and will, as long as there is any occlusion for it.

**Ver. 8.** *If we say that we have no sin, &c.*] Notwithstanding believers are cleansed from their sins by the blood of Christ, yet they are not without sin; no man is without sin: this is not only true of all men, as they come into the world, being conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and of all that are in a state of unregeneracy, and of God's elect, while in such a state, but even of all regenerated and sanctified persons in this life; as appears by the ingenuous confessions of sin made by the saints in all ages; by their complaints concerning it, and groans under it; by the continual war in them

pardoning grace, and for the fresh application of Christ's blood for cleansing; by their frequent slips and falls, and often backslidings: and though their sins are all pardoned, and they are justified from all things by the righteousness of

sin, and are under no obligation to punishment on account of it, yet not from the being of it; their sins were indeed transferred from them to Christ,

redeemed from them, and are acquitted, discharged, and pardoned, so that sin is not imputed to them, and God sees no iniquity in them in the article

the guilt of them, and are taken out of their sight, and they have no more conscience of them, having their hearts sprinkled and purged by the blood

of God, or the second death, by reason of them; yet pardon of sin, and justification from it, though they take away the guilt of sin, and free from

cause it to cease to act, or do not make sins cease to be sins, or change the nature of actions, of sinful ones, to make them harmless, innocent, or

the same kind and nature, and equally transgressions of the law, and many of them are attended with more aggravating circumstances, and are taken

people in love: now though a believer may say that he has not this or that particular sin, or is not guilty of this or that sin, for he has the seeds of all

shall have no sin, for in the other state the being and principle of sin will be removed, and the saints will be perfectly holy in themselves, yet he cannot,

cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ should affirm this,

*we deceive ourselves*

put a cheat upon themselves, thinking themselves to be something when they are nothing; flattering themselves what pure and holy creatures they

deceptions, sad delusions, and gross impositions upon themselves:

*and the truth is not in us*

persons, for if there was a real work of God upon their souls, they would

know and discern the plague of their own hearts, the impurity of their nature, and the imperfection of their obedience; nor is the word of truth in them, for if that had an entrance into them, and worked effectually in them, they would in the light of it discover much sin and iniquity in them; and indeed there is no principle of truth, no veracity in them; there is no sincerity nor ingenuity in them; they do not speak honestly and uprightly, but contrary to the dictates of their own conscience.

**Ver. 9.** *If we confess our sins*, &c.] Not to one other; for though it is our duty to confess our faults to our fellow creatures and fellow Christians which are committed against them, yet are under no obligation to confess such as are more immediately against God, and which lie between him and ourselves; or at least it is sufficient to confess and acknowledge in general what sinful creatures we are, without entering into particulars; for confession of sin is to be made to God, against whom it is committed, and who only can pardon: and a man that truly confesses his sin is one that the Spirit of God has convinced of it, and has shown him its exceeding sinfulness, and filled him with a godly sorrow for it, and given him repentance unto salvation, that needeth not to be repented of; and who, under such a sight and sense of sin, and concern for it, comes and acknowledges it before the Lord, humbly imploring, for Christ's sake, his pardoning grace and mercy; and such obtain it:

*he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins*: forgiveness of sin here intends not the act of forgiveness, as in God, proceeding upon the bloodshed and sacrifice of Christ, which is done at once, and includes all sin, past, present, and to come; but an application of pardoning grace to a poor sensible sinner, humbled under a sense of sin, and confessing it before the Lord; and confession of sin is not the cause or condition of pardon, nor of the manifestation of it, but is descriptive of the person, and points him out, to whom God will and does make known his forgiving love; for to whomsoever he grants repentance, he gives the remission of sin; in doing of which he is faithful to his word of promise; such as in (<sup>אֱמֵן</sup>Proverbs 28:13 <sup>אֱמֵן</sup>Isaiah 55:7); “and just”; in being “true”, as the Arabic version adds, to his word; and showing a proper regard to the blood and sacrifice of his Son; for his blood being shed, and hereby satisfaction made to the law and justice of God, it is a righteous thing in him to justify from sin, and forgive the sinner for whom Christ has shed his blood, and not impute it to him, or punish him for it; though the word here used may answer to the Hebrew word **qydx**, which sometimes carries in it the notion and idea of

mercy and beneficence; hence mercy to the poor is sometimes expressed by righteousness; and the righteous acts of God intend his mercies and forgiveness of sin springs from the tender mercies of our God, and is both

Christ, and of pure grace and mercy to the pardoned sinner: the following clause,

*unrighteousness*, is but the same thing  
unrighteousness is sin, and to cleanse from sin is to remove the guilt of it, by an application of the blood of Christ who is light, and with whom the saints have fellowship; or his Son Jesus Christ, who is the nearest antecedent, and who, being truly God, has a

**Ver. 10.** , &c.] Have never sinned, in time past as well as now; deny original sin, and that men are born in sin, but

concupiscence is not sin; and so not regarding internal lusts and desires as sinful, only what is external, fancy they have so lived as to have been

*we make him a liar*: that is, God, who in his word declares that the wicked speaking lies; that his own people are transgressors from the womb; that all have sinned and come short of his glory; and that there is none that does and become filthy by it, and so obnoxious to the wrath of God:

*and his word is not in us*  
word of God which declares these things; no regard is had unto it; it “is not with us”, as the Ethiopic versions render it; it is not used and attended to as the rule and standard of truth, but is east away and despised;

for, was this the case, they would have other notions of themselves than that of sinless creatures. The apostle has regard either to the Gnostics, a set even in the midst of all their impurities, and notwithstanding their vicious lives; or to entertained such sort of notions as these of being perfect and without sin <sup>f8</sup>

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN 2

In this chapter the apostle comforts the saints under a sense of sin; urges them to an observance of the commandments of God, in imitation of Christ, particularly to the new commandment of brotherly love, and gives his reasons for it; dehorts them from the love of the world, and the things of it; cautions them against false teachers and antichrists, and exhorts them to abide in Christ, and persevere in the faith of him. He first declares that the end of his writing was to prevent their sinning; but supposing any should fall into sin through infirmity, he comforts them with the consideration of the advocacy of Christ, and of his being the propitiation for the sins both of Jews and Gentiles, ([1 John 2:1,2](#)), and whereas some persons might boast of their knowledge of Christ, and neglect his commands, he observes, that the keeping of them is the best evidence of true knowledge, and of the sincerity of their love to God, and of their being in Christ; and that such who show no regard to them are liars, and the truth is not in them; and such that profess to be in Christ and abide in him, ought to walk as they have him for an example, ([1 John 2:3-6](#)), and instances in a particular commandment, to love one another, which on different accounts is called an old and a new commandment, and which has been verified both in Christ and his people; for which a reason is given in the latter, the darkness being past, and the true light shining, ([1 John 2:7,8](#)), upon which some propositions are founded, as that he that professes to be in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness to this very moment; and that he that loves his brother is evidently in the light, nor will he easily give or take offence; and that he that hates his brother is not only in darkness, but walks in it, being blinded by it, and so knows not whither he is going, ([1 John 2:9-11](#)), and this commandment of love the apostle writes to the saints, as distinguished into the several classes of fathers, young men, and children; and urges it on them from the consideration of the blessings of grace peculiar to them; as ancient knowledge to fathers, strength and victory to young men, knowledge of the Father, and remission of sins, to children, ([1 John 2:12-14](#)), and then he dissuades from the love of worldly things, seeing the love of them is not consistent with the love of

God; and seeing the things that are in it are vain and sinful, and are not of God, but of the world; and since the world and its lust pass away, when he that does the will of God abides for ever, (~~1~~ John 2:15-17), he next observes unto them, that there were many antichrists in the world; which was an evidence of its being the last time; and these he describes as schismatics and apostates from the Christian churches, (~~1~~ John 2:18,19), but as for the saints he writes to, they were of another character, they were truly Christians, having an anointing from the Holy One, by which they knew all things; nor did the apostle write to them as ignorant, but as knowing persons, and able to distinguish between truth and error, (~~1~~ John 2:20,21), and then he goes on with his description of antichristian liars, showing that they were such who denied Jesus to be the Messiah, and the relation that is between the Father and the Son, (~~1~~ John 2:22,23), and closes the chapter with an exhortation to perseverance in the doctrine of Christ; since it was what they had heard from the beginning, and since by so doing they would continue in the Father and in the Son, and besides had the promise of eternal life, (~~1~~ John 2:24,25), and indeed this was the main thing in view in writing to them concerning seducers, to preserve them from them, though indeed this was in a great measure needless, since the anointing they had received abode in them; and taught them all things, and according as they regarded its teaching they would abide in Christ, (~~1~~ John 2:26,27), to which he exhorts them from the consideration of that boldness and confidence it would give them at his appearance, who they must know is righteous, and so that everyone that doth righteousness is born of him, (~~1~~ John 2:28,29).

**Ver. 1.** *My little children*, &c.] The apostle may address the saints under this character, on account of their regeneration by the Spirit and grace of God, in which they were as newborn babes; and on account of his being the instrument of their conversion, and so was their spiritual father, and therefore calls them his own children; and he might the rather use such a way of speaking, because of his advanced age, being now in his old age, and John the elder in age as well as in office; as well as to show his paternal affection for them, and care of them, and that what he had wrote, or should write, was not from any disrespect, but from pure love to them; and it might serve to put them in mind of their weakness in faith, in knowledge, and spiritual strength, that they might not entertain high notions of themselves, as if they were perfect and without infirmities; and it is easy to observe, that this is one of Christ's expressions, (~~John~~ 13:33),

from whose lips the apostle took it, whose words and phrases he greatly delighted in, as he seems to do in this, by his frequent use of it; (see <sup>ἄλλοις</sup>1 John 2:18,28 3:7,18 4:4 5:21).

*These things write I unto you;* concerning the purity and holiness of God, who is light itself; concerning fellowship with him, which no one that lives in sin can have; concerning pardon and cleansing from sin by the blood of Christ, and concerning sin being in them, and they not without it. The Ethiopic version reads, “we write”, as in (<sup>ἄλλοις</sup>1 John 1:4);

*that ye sin not;* not that he thought they could be entirely without it, either without the being of it, or the commission of it, in thought, word, or deed, for this would be to suppose that which is contrary to his own words, in (<sup>ἄλλοις</sup>1 John 1:8,10); but he suggests that the end of his writing on these subjects was, that they might not live in sin, and indulge themselves in a vicious course of living, give up themselves to it, and walk in it, and work it with all greediness: and nothing could be more suitably adapted to such an end than the consideration of the holiness of God, who calls by his grace; and of the necessity of light and grace and holiness in men to communion with him; and of the pardoning grace of God and cleansing blood of Christ, which, when savingly applied, sets men against sin, and makes them zealous of good works; and of the indwelling of sin in the saints, which puts them upon their guard against it:

*and if any man sin;* as every man does, even everyone that is in the light, and walks in it, and has fellowship with God; everyone that believes in Christ, and is justified through his righteousness, and pardoned by his blood; everyone of the little children; for the apostle is not speaking of mankind in general who sin, for Christ is not an advocate for all that sin, but of these in particular; hence the Arabic version renders it, “if any of you sin”; and this, with the following, he says not to encourage in sin, but to comfort under a sense of it:

*we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;* Christ is an advocate, not for just or righteous persons, for as he came not to call these to repentance, nor to die for them, so such have no need of an advocate, nor is he one for them; but as he came to call sinners, and to save them, and died for them, the just for the unjust, so he is an advocate, and makes intercession for transgressors; and not for all men, though they have all sinned; not for the world, or those so called in distinction from the persons given him by his Father, for these he prays not; but for all the elect,

and whatsoever charges are brought against them he answers to them, and for them; and for all that believe in him, be they weak or strong, even for the apostles as well as others; for they were not without sin, were men of like passions as others, and carried about with them a body of sin, and had their daily infirmities, and so needed an advocate as others; and hence John says, “we have an advocate”, &c. but then Christ is not an advocate for sin, though for sinners; he does not vindicate the commission of sin, or plead for the performance of it; he is no patron of iniquity; nor does he deny that his clients have sinned, or affirm that their actions are not sins; he allows in court all their sins, with all their aggravated circumstances; nor does he go about to excuse or extenuate them; but he is an advocate for the non-imputation of them, and for the application of pardon to them: he pleads in their favour, that these sins have been laid upon him, and he has bore them; that his blood has been shed for the remission of them, and that he has made full satisfaction for them; and therefore in justice they ought not to be laid to their charge; but that the forgiveness of them should be applied unto them, for the relief and comfort of their burdened and distressed consciences: and for this he is an advocate for his poor sinning people “with the Father”; who being the first Person, and the Son the advocate, and the Spirit sustaining a like character, is only mentioned; and he being God against whom sin is committed, and to whom the satisfaction is made; and the rather, as he is the Father of Christ, and of those for whom he is an advocate; seeing it may be concluded that his pleadings will be with success, since he is not only related to him, and has an interest in him himself, but the persons also, whose patron he is, are related to him, and have a share in his paternal affection and care: moreover, this phrase, as it expresses the distinct personality of Christ from the Father, so his being with him in heaven at his right hand, and nearness to him; where he discharges this office of his, partly by appearing in person for his people in the presence of God; and partly by carrying in and presenting their confessions of sin, and their prayers for the fresh discoveries and applications of pardoning grace, which he offers up to his Father with the sweet incense of his mediation; and chiefly by pleading the virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, which are carried within the vail, and are always in sight, and call aloud for peace and pardon; as also by answering and removing the charges and accusations of the court adversary, the accuser of the brethren, the devil; as well as by the declarations of his will, demanding in point of justice, in consideration of his sufferings and death, that such and such blessings be bestowed upon his

people, as pardon, righteousness, grace, and supplies of grace, and at last glory; and by applying these benefits to their souls as a “comforter”, which the word here used also signifies, and is so rendered, (<sup><5146></sup>John 14:16,26 15:26 16:7); and by the Arabic version here. Now the saints have but one advocate, and that is enough for them; the apostle does not say we have advocates, but “an advocate”; not angels, nor saints departed, but Jesus Christ only, who is the one Mediator between God and man, (<sup><5115></sup>1 Timothy 2:5): and he is a continual one, he ever lives to make intercession; his blood is always speaking, and he always pleading; and therefore it is said “we have”, not we have had, or we shall have an advocate and he is a prevalent one, he is always heard, he thoroughly pleads the cause he undertakes, and ever carries it; which is owing to the dignity of his person, his interest with his Father, and the virtue and value of his sacrifice: and he every way fit for such a work, for he is “righteous”; not only in his natures, both divine and human, but in his office, as Mediator, which he faithfully and righteously performs; he is a very proper person to plead for guilty persons, which he could not do if he himself was guilty; but he is so holy and righteous that nothing can be objected to him by God; and it need not be doubted by men that he will act the faithful part to them, and righteously serve them and their cause; and it is moreover his righteousness which he has wrought out, and is imputed to them, that carries the cause for them; and therefore this character of Christ fitly added, as is also the following. The Jews<sup>f9</sup> have adopted the word in the text into their language, but have applied it to a different purpose, to alms deeds, repentance, and good works. Much more agreeably Philo the Jew<sup>f10</sup> speaks of the son of perfect virtue, **παρακλητω**, “as an advocate” for the forgiveness of sins, and for a supply of everlasting good things.

**Ver. 2.** *And he is the propitiation for our sins*, &c.] For the sins of us who now believe, and are Jews:

*and not for ours only*; but for the sins of Old Testament saints, and of those who shall hereafter believe in Christ, and of the Gentiles also, signified in the next clause:

*but also for [the sins] of the whole world*; the Syriac version renders it, “not for us only, but also for the whole world”; that is, not for the Jews only, for John was a Jew, and so were those he wrote unto, but for the Gentiles also. Nothing is more common in Jewish writings than to call the Gentiles **aml e** “the world”; and **μl wħ l k**, “the whole world”; and **MI wħ**

**twmwa**, “the nations of the world”<sup>f11</sup>; (see Gill on “~~4129~~John 12:19”); and the word “world” is so used in Scripture; (see ~~4116~~John 3:16 4:42 ~~4112~~Romans 11:12,15); and stands opposed to a notion the Jews have of the Gentiles, that **hrpk Nhl Nya**, “there is no propitiation for them”<sup>f12</sup>: and it is easy to observe, that when this phrase is not used of the Gentiles, it is to be understood in a limited and restrained sense; as when they say<sup>f13</sup>,

“it happened to a certain high priest, that when he went out of the sanctuary, **aml [ yl wk**, “the whole world” went after him;”

which could only design the people in the temple. And elsewhere<sup>f14</sup> it is said,

“**aml [ yl wk**, “the “whole world” has left the Misna, and gone after the “Gemara”;”

which at most can only intend the Jews; and indeed only a majority of their doctors, who were conversant with these writings: and in another place<sup>f15</sup>,

“**aml [ yl wk**, “the whole world” fell on their faces, but Raf did not fall on his face;”

where it means no more than the congregation. Once more, it is said<sup>f16</sup>, when

“R. Simeon ben Gamaliel entered (the synagogue), **aml [ yl wk**, “the whole world” stood up before him;”

that is, the people in the synagogue: to which may be added<sup>f17</sup>,

“when a great man makes a mourning, **aml [ yl wk**, “the whole world” come to honour him;”

i.e. a great number of persons attend the funeral pomp: and so these phrases, **ygyl p al aml øl wk**, “the whole world” is not divided, or does not dissent<sup>f18</sup>; **yrbæaml øl wk**, “the whole world” are of opinion<sup>f19</sup>, are frequently met with in the Talmud, by which, an agreement among the Rabbins, in certain points, is designed; yea, sometimes the phrase, “all the men of the world”<sup>f20</sup>, only intend the inhabitants of a city where a synagogue was, and, at most, only the Jews: and so this phrase, “all the world”, or “the whole world”, in Scripture, unless when it signifies the whole universe, or the habitable earth, is always used in a limited sense,

either for the Roman empire, or the churches of Christ in the world, or believers, or the present inhabitants of the world, or a part of them only, (<sup>f21</sup> Luke 2:1 <sup>f22</sup> Romans 1:8 3:19 <sup>f23</sup> Colossians 1:6 <sup>f24</sup> Revelation 3:10 12:9 13:3); and so it is in this epistle, (<sup>f25</sup> 1 John 5:19); where the whole world lying in wickedness is manifestly distinguished from the saints, who are of God, and belong not to the world; and therefore cannot be understood of all the individuals in the world; and the like distinction is in this text itself, for “the sins of the whole world” are opposed to “our sins”, the sins of the apostle and others to whom he joins himself; who therefore belonged not to, nor were a part of the whole world, for whose sins Christ is a propitiation as for theirs: so that this passage cannot furnish out any argument for universal redemption; for besides these things, it may be further observed, that for whose sins Christ is a propitiation, their sins are atoned for and pardoned, and their persons justified from all sin, and so shall certainly be glorified, which is not true of the whole world, and every man and woman in it; moreover, Christ is a propitiation through faith in his blood, the benefit of his propitiatory sacrifice is only received and enjoyed through faith; so that in the event it appears that Christ is a propitiation only for believers, a character which does not agree with all mankind; add to this, that for whom Christ is a propitiation he is also an advocate, (<sup>f26</sup> 1 John 2:1); but he is not an advocate for every individual person in the world; yea, there is a world he will not pray for (<sup>f27</sup> John 17:9), and consequently is not a propitiation for them. Once more, the design of the apostle in these words is to comfort his “little children” with the advocacy and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, who might fall into sin through weakness and inadvertency; but what comfort would it yield to a distressed mind, to be told that Christ was a propitiation not only for the sins of the apostles and other saints, but for the sins of every individual in the world, even of these that are in hell? Would it not be natural for persons in such circumstances to argue rather against, than for themselves, and conclude that seeing persons might be damned notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that this might, and would be their case. In what sense Christ is a propitiation, (see Gill on “<sup>f28</sup> Romans 3:25”). The Jews have no notion of the Messiah as a propitiation or atonement; sometimes they say <sup>f21</sup> repentance atones for all sin; sometimes the death of the righteous <sup>f22</sup>; sometimes incense <sup>f23</sup>; sometimes the priests' garments <sup>f24</sup>; sometimes it is the day of atonement <sup>f25</sup>; and indeed they are in the utmost puzzle about atonement; and they even confess in their prayers <sup>f26</sup>, that they have now neither altar nor priest to atone for them; (see Gill on “<sup>f29</sup> 1 John 4:10”).

**Ver. 3.** *And hereby we do know that we know him,* &c.] Either the Father, with whom Christ is an advocate; not as the God of nature, and by the light of it, nor as the lawgiver and Judge of the whole earth, and by the law of Moses; but as the God of all grace, as a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, as the Father of Christ, and as in him by the Gospel; and this not in a mere notional and speculative way, but with love and affection; not with fear and trembling, as devils know him, nor in theory, as formal professors and hypocrites, but with a knowledge, joined with hearty love of him, and cheerful obedience to him: or else Christ, the advocate and propitiation for sin; and him also, not with a mere notional knowledge of his person and offices, which carnal men and devils themselves have of him, but with that which is spiritual, special, and saving, being from the Spirit and grace of God; and regards Christ as a Saviour, as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, and an advocate with God the Father; and by which he is approved as such, to the rejection of all other savours, sacrifices, and advocates; and is trusted, confided, and believed in as such, and affectionately loved, and that above all others, in sincerity and truth; and is readily obeyed in his word and ordinances; for where there is true knowledge of Christ, there is faith in him; and where there is faith in him, there is love to him, for faith works by love; and where there is love to him, there will be an observance of his commands; and this is here made the evidence of the true knowledge of him: for it follows,

*if we keep his commandments;* not the commandments of men, for the keeping of them arises from ignorance of God, and is a proof of it; nor the commandments of the ceremonial law, which are abolished, particularly circumcision, which is opposed to the keeping of the commandments of God, (~~4079~~1 Corinthians 7:19); but either those of the moral law, and which are more particularly the commandments of God the Father; the observance of which, though it cannot be with perfection, yet being in faith, and from love to God, and with a view to his glory, is an evidence of the true knowledge of him and of his will: or else those commandments, which are more especially the commandments of Christ Jesus; such as the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, which are peculiar to the Gospel dispensation; and which being kept as they were delivered by Christ, and in his name and strength, and to his glory, without depending on them for life and salvation, is an argument and proof of the right knowledge of him; and particularly his new commandment of loving one another may be chiefly designed, that being what the apostle has greatly in

view throughout this epistle; now let it be observed, that keeping of the commands of God, or Christ, is not the knowledge of either of them itself, for much may be done in an external way, yet neither God nor Christ be spiritually and savingly known; nor is it the cause of such knowledge, for that is owing to the Spirit and grace of God; but is an effect or consequence of spiritual knowledge, and so an evidence of it; hereby is not the knowledge itself, but the knowledge of that knowledge, that is, that it is true and genuine.

**Ver. 4.** *He that saith I know him, &c.*] God or Christ, as the Gnostics did, who pretended to great, even perfect, knowledge of divine things:

*and keepeth not his commandments*; which the above persons had no regard to, and as many who profess great light and knowledge in our days show no concern for:

*is a liar*; he contradicts what he says, and gives the lie to it; for though in words he professes to know God, in works he denies him, and which betrays his ignorance of him:

*and the truth is not in him*; there is no true knowledge of God and Christ in him; nor is the truth of the Gospel in his heart, however it may be in his head; nor is the truth of grace in him, for each of these lead persons to obedience. The Ethiopic version renders it, “the truth of God is not with him”; (see Gill on “<sup>6118</sup>1 John 1:8”).

**Ver. 5.** *But whoso keepeth his word, &c.*] Either the word of the Gospel, and the truths of it, who receives it in love, cordially embraces and retains it, and will by no means part with it, but holds it fast, and stands fast in it; or the precepts and ordinances of the word, who loves these, and esteems them above fine gold, and concerning all things to be right, and observes them as they should be:

*in him verily is the love of God perfected*: not the love wherewith God loves him, for that is perfect in himself, and admits of no degrees, and cannot be more or less in his heart, and is entirely independent of the obedience of men, or any works of theirs; it is true indeed the manifestations of this love to the saints are imperfect, and may be more and greater, and greater manifestations of love are promised to such that love Christ, and keep his commandments, (<sup>6121</sup>John 14:21,23); but here it is to be understood not actively, but passively, of the love wherewith God is loved by his people; and intends not the absolute perfection of it in them, in

whom it often waxes cold, and is left, or the fervour of it abated, but the sincerity and reality of it; for by keeping the word of God, both his truths and his ordinances, it is clearly seen that their love to him is without dissimulation, and is not in tongue only, but in deed and in truth: now it is not the keeping of the word of God that causes this love, or makes it perfect or sincere, for it is a fruit of the Spirit, and is owing to the grace of God; but love, on the other hand, is the cause of keeping of the word; and the latter being a consequent and an effect of the former, is the evidence of it, of the truth and sincerity of it:

*hereby know we that we are in him*: in Christ, not merely nominally, or by profession, as all that name the name of Christ, and are in a Gospel church state, may be said to be; but really, first secretly, through the love of Christ, the election of God, and the covenant of grace, and then openly, in conversion and the effectual calling, through believing in Christ, when the saints appear to be in him as branches in the vine; and which is known by their fruits, as here, by keeping the word, and doing the commandments of Christ, which do not put a man into Christ, but only show that he is there; for a man's being in Christ is owing to the grace of God; this is the first thing done in grace, (~~413~~1 Corinthians 1:30).

**Ver. 6.** *He that saith he abideth in him*, &c.] As all do that are in him; once in Christ, and always in Christ; they are set as a seal on his arm and heart, which can never be removed; they are in his arms, and can never be plucked from thence; and are members of him, and can never be disunited from him: or dwelleth in him, as in (~~416~~John 6:56); that is, by faith; who under a sense of sin and danger have fled to Christ, as to a strong tower and place of defence, where they dwell safely, peaceably, pleasantly, and comfortably, enjoying whatever is necessary for them. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “he that saith I am in him”; loved by him, chosen in him, united to him, a member of his, and have communion with him:

*ought himself also to walk even as he walked*; as Christ walked, lived, and acted, so ought he; that is, to imitate him and follow him, as he has him for an example; not in his miraculous works in raising the dead, healing the sick, and walking upon the waters, &c. which were wrought as proofs of his deity and of his Messiahship, and not intended for imitation; nor in his mediatorial performances, as in his propitiatory sacrifice and advocacy; but in the exercise of grace, and duties of religion as a man, and in a private way; and may chiefly regard walking in love, as he walked, (see

~~¶~~Ephesians 5:2); and is what is in the following verses insisted on, namely, the new commandment of love to the brethren; which should be to all as his was, and, like his, constant and lasting; and, when the case requires, should be shown by laying down life for them. The “as” is not a note of equality, but of likeness; for it cannot be thought that saints should walk in that degree of perfection, in humility, patience, love, and in the exercise of every other grace, and in the discharge of duty, as Christ did; only that they should copy after him, and make his obedience and life the rule of theirs.

**Ver. 7.** *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, &c.*] Some understand this of faith, which this apostle calls a commandment, (~~¶~~1 John 3:23); but it rather intends the commandment of love, especially to the brethren, of which the apostle says the same things as here in his second epistle, (~~¶~~1 John 2:5,6); and this sense agrees both with what goes before and follows after, and is a considerable branch of the commandments of Christ to be kept, and of walking as he walked; and the word “brethren”, prefixed to this account, may direct to, and strengthen this sense, though the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions read, “beloved”; and so the Alexandrian copy, and others: and this commandment is said to be not a new one,

*but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning;* it being in its original a part of the eternal law of truth, founded upon the unalterable nature and eternal will of God, who is love itself, and requires it in all his creatures; being what was written on Adam's heart in a state of innocence, and a branch of the divine image stamped upon him; and is what was delivered in the law of Moses, for love to God and men is the sum and substance of that; and was taught by Christ and his apostles from the beginning of the Gospel dispensation; and was what these saints had been acquainted with, and influentially instructed in from their first conversion, being taught of God in regeneration to love one another; so that this was no novel doctrine, no upstart notion, no new law, but of the greatest and most venerable antiquity, and therefore to be regarded in the most respectful manner.

*The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning;* or this ancient law of love is contained in, and enforced by that word or doctrine which was delivered from the beginning of time; and which these saints had heard of, concerning the seed of the woman's

bruising the serpent's head, which includes the work of redemption and salvation by Christ, atonement by his sacrifice, forgiveness of sin through his blood, and justification by his righteousness, than which nothing can more powerfully engage to love God, and Christ, and one another; and which is also strongly encouraged by the word of God and Gospel of Christ, which they had heard, and had a spiritual and saving knowledge of, from the time they were effectually called by the grace of God: the phrase, "from the beginning", is left out in the Alexandrian copy, and others, and in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions; it is omitted in both clauses of the text in the latter.

**Ver. 8.** *Again, a new commandment I write unto you,* &c.] Which is the same with the former, considered in different respects. The command of brotherly love is a new one; that is, it is an excellent one, as a new name is an excellent name, and a new song is an excellent one; it is renewed by Christ under the Gospel dispensation; it is newly explained by him, and purged from the false glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees; (see <sup><105B></sup>Matthew 5:43,44); and enforced by him with a new argument, and by a new example of his own, even his own love to his people; and which is observed by them in a new manner, they being made new creatures; and this law being anew written in their hearts, under the renewing work of the Spirit of God, as a branch of the new covenant of grace; (see <sup><103B></sup>John 13:34). The Jews <sup>f27</sup> expect **hvdj hrwt**, "a new law" to be given them by the bands of the Messiah; and a new one he has given, even the new commandment of love, and which is the fulfilling of the law.

*Which things is true in him, and in you.* The Alexandrian copy reads, "in us"; the sense is either, it is true "in itself", as the phrase will bear to be rendered, and it is verified in you, or in us, to be a new commandment; or it is true in Christ, it is yea and amen in him; it has its full completion in him, who is the fulfilling end of the law, as well as it has been faithfully delivered, truly explained, and warmly and affectionately recommended and urged by him; and he is the great pattern and exemplar of it: and the love which this new commandment requires is really and truly in the saints, implanted in them in regeneration, is a fruit of the Spirit, and which faith works by, and will always continue in them; and should be in its actings like Christ's, true, sincere, cordial, affectionate, constant, and universal: and some think the word **εστι**, or **εστω**, "is", or "let it be", is wanting in the last clause, and may be read, "which thing is true in him, and is", or "let it be in you": that is, as love to the brethren is true and sincere in Christ, so

it is, or should be in you; it should be without dissimulation, and so it was, as the reason following shows:

*because the darkness is past*, or is “passing”; meaning either the darkness of the ceremonial law, which lay in dark types and shadows, and in cloudy sacrifices, and mystical representations of things, and was a shadow of good things to come; and its shadows were now fleeing away apace, in fact as well as in right; and so the Alexandrian copy reads, “because the shadow is passing away”; the night of Jewish darkness was far spent, and the Gospel day was not only broke, but it was, or near noonday, which brought the light of faith, and the heat of love with it: or else the darkness of sin and ignorance, of a state of nature, and of the kingdom of Satan, in which the people of God are before conversion; which then passes away gradually, by little and little, for it is not removed at once, or wholly gone; for though the saints are at once removed out of a state of darkness, and from the kingdom of darkness, and the power of it, yet they are not wholly free from the darkness of sin and ignorance, they still see but through a glass darkly: and the words are better rendered, the darkness passes”, or “is passing away”, and not is past”, or “has passed away”; for as yet it is not entirely gone;

*and the true light now shineth*; either the Gospel, which is a light, and a true and substantial one, in distinction from the dim light of nature, or the shadowy law of Moses; and which now, under the present dispensation, shines out in a most glorious manner, as the sun in its full strength; and so the Ethiopic version renders it, “the light of truth”; the word of truth, the Gospel of our salvation: or Jesus Christ, who is so called, (~~GOOD~~ John 1:9); in distinction from typical lights, as the “Urim” on the high priest's breastplate, the candlestick in the tabernacle and temple, and the pillar of fire by night, which guided the Israelites through the wilderness; and in opposition to all false lights, to the Scribes and Pharisees, to false Christs and false prophets, which are so many “ignes fatui”; but Christ is the sun of righteousness that is risen in our “horizon”, and the true light which shines out in a most illustrious manner: or the light of grace is here intended, that light which the Spirit of God illuminates with in conversion; in which a man sees sin in its true colours, and has a spiritual and saving sight of Christ, of pardon, peace, life, righteousness, and salvation by him; which is no other than the light of faith, by which an enlightened person sees the Son, looks to him, and has an evidence of the unseen glories of another world. Now this is a true light, things are seen by the believer in a right light, both his

own sins, and the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; this is a shining one, which cannot but be observed by himself, and shines more and more to the perfect day; and it now shines as it did not before, in a state of nature, and continues to shine, and ever will: this light will never be put out, and is the cause of brotherly love, being truly in the saints, and of the continuance of it; before this light shines, men live in malice, but when it comes and shines, as they walk in light, they walk in love.

**Ver. 9.** *He that saith he is in the light*, &c.] Is in Christ the light, or has the true knowledge of the light of the Gospel, or is illuminated by the Spirit of God; for persons may profess to be enlightened ones, and not be so: wherefore the apostle does not say, he that is in the light, but he that says he is,

*and hateth his brother*; who is so either by creation, as all men are brethren, having one Father, that has made them, and brought them up; or by regeneration, being born of God the Father, and in the same family and household of faith; and so regards such who are in a spiritual relation, whom to hate internally, or not to love, is inconsistent with being in the light, or having faith, which is always naturally and necessarily accompanied with the heat of love; for as light and heat, so faith and love go together: wherefore, let a man's profession of light be what it will, if love to his brother is wanting, he

*is in darkness even until now*; he is in a state of nature and unregeneracy, which is a state of darkness and ignorance; he is under the power of darkness, and in the kingdom of Satan; who is the ruler of the darkness of this world; he ever was so from his birth; he never was called nor delivered out of it, but is still in it to this moment, and so remains. This seems to be very much levelled against the Jews, who make hatred of the brother in some cases lawful: for they say <sup>f28</sup>,

“if one man observes sin in another, and reproveth him for it, and he does not receive his reproof, *wtwançl rtwm*, “it is lawful to hate him”;

(see Gill on “<sup>4058</sup>Matthew 5:43”).

**Ver. 10.** *He that loveth his brother*, &c.] As such, and because he is his brother in Christ, and that cordially and sincerely, without hypocrisy and

dissimulation, and by love serves him, both in things temporal and spiritual, and so observes the new, and yet old commandment,

*abideth in the light*: it is a plain case, that such a man is in the light of grace, and continues in it; for though it is not his love to the brethren which is the cause of his light, of his being and continuing in it, for that is owing to the spirit of light and knowledge, but on the contrary, light is the cause of his love; yet it is an evidence of it, that by which it is known, as the cause is known by the effect; (see ~~EBB~~ John 3:14);

*and there is none occasion of stumbling in him*, or “there is no scandal” or “offence in him”; he gives no offence to his brother, or at least, as much as in him lies, he takes care that he gives none; he avoids, as much as can be, putting a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way, by the use of things indifferent, or by any other action; nor will he easily take offence at what is said or done unto him, for charity or love is not easily provoked, it suffers long, and bears all things; (see ~~EBB~~ 1 Corinthians 13:4,5,7); nor does he so much and so frequently transgress the laws of God, and particularly those which regard his neighbour or his brother, and so easily fall into the snares of Satan, because he is in the light, and walks in the light, and sees his way, and what lies in his way, and, so shuns and avoids occasion of stumbling and falling. There is not in him that wrath, and malice, and envy, which lead on to the commission of other sins; for love works no ill, but fulfils the law, and will not suffer him to commit adultery, to kill, to steal, or bear false witness against his neighbour, friend, and brother; (see ~~EBB~~ Romans 13:9,10); and such an one enjoys great peace, tranquillity, and happiness; he has much comfort in himself, and pleasure in the saints, and delight in their company; he walks inoffensively, and in an harmless manner, without hurting himself, or any other, (~~EBB~~ Psalm 119:165).

**Ver. 11.** *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness*, &c.] As is before expressed in (~~EBB~~ 1 John 2:9), to which is added,

*and walketh in darkness*; he goes on in it, and takes delight in it, as dangerous and uncomfortable as it is:

*and knoweth not whither he goeth*; he cannot discern between good and evil; he puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; he sees not what is before him, nor what stumblingblocks lie in the way; he is not aware of the snares, pits, and traps he is in danger of falling into; nor does he know and

consider what these paths of darkness, of sin, and ignorance, and infidelity, lead unto, even unto utter darkness, where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth: and the reason is,

*because that darkness hath blinded his eyes*; either Satan, the god of this world, who blinds the minds of them that believe not, and who is darkness itself, and the cause of darkness in himself and in others, and one of whose names this was with the Jews <sup>f29</sup>; (see Gill on “~~423~~ Luke 22:53”); or that natural darkness which sin has brought upon the understanding, and has blinded the eyes of it, called the blindness of the heart, (~~408~~ Ephesians 4:18), so that a man under the power of it is ignorant of himself, and knows not that he is blind and miserable; is a stranger to the way of peace, and life by Christ, and knows not what he is about, and where he is, or whither he is going, and what his end will be.

**Ver. 12.** *I write unto you, little children*, &c.] By whom the apostle means in common all the saints he writes to, whom he afterwards distributes into fathers, young men, and little children; for the same word is used here as in (~~611~~ 1 John 2:1); and a different one from that which is rendered little children in (~~613~~ 1 John 2:13); and besides, the following blessing of pardon of sin is common to all the children of God of different ages: now what the apostle says he writes unto them, intends not the epistle in general, but the new commandment of love in particular; and which he urges and enforces on them all, for this reason,

*because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*; these little children had been sinners by nature and practice, and were not now without sin, but they shared in the blessing of the forgiveness of it; which arises from the abundant mercy and rich grace of God, and proceeds on the blood and sacrifice of Christ; and therefore is said to be “for his name's sake”; not for the sake of any merits in men, any services or works of theirs, but for the sake of Christ, his blood, sacrifice and satisfaction; and it reaches to all sins, original and actual, secret and open, past, present, and to come; and here intends the application of it by the Spirit of God, and the reception of it by faith: and which, as it is a reason and argument encouraging love to God, who freely and fully forgives, and to Christ, whose blood was shed for the remission of sin, so to their brethren and fellow Christians; who are equally sharers in the same blessing, and when they should love, because they are loved of God and Christ; and whom they should forgive, because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven them. It may be, they may be called

here “little children”, with a view to their interest in this blessing of grace. So the Jews say <sup>f30</sup>, that Saul was called

““the son of one year in his reign”; (~~0931~~1 Samuel 13:1); because all his iniquities were forgiven him, **qwnyt**k “as a sucking child” of a year old.”

**Ver. 13.** *I write unto you, fathers, &c.*] Not merely in age, though they might be men in years who are here intended, or only with respect to their long standing in the church, which might be the case; though persons may be in years, and of a long standing in the church, and yet be children in knowledge and experience: but here it designs such, who, in comparison of others, were perfect, and were spiritual, and judged all things; had a well informed and established judgment in divine things, and were, in understanding, men, fathers, and not babes in Christ; so the Jews used to call their men of wisdom, and knowledge, and understanding, **twba**, “Abot”, “fathers”. Hence there is a whole treatise in the Misna called Pirke Abot, which contains the apophthegms, wise sayings, and sentences of their fathers, or wise men. Now the apostle writes the new commandment of love, and urges it on these, for this reason,

*because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning*; either God the Father, who is from everlasting to everlasting, the Ancient of days, the eternal I AM, whom to know is life eternal; whose everlasting love to them, whose covenant of grace with his Son for them, before the world was, and the ancient transactions, and settlements of his grace on their account, they were acquainted with: or Jesus Christ, the Logos or Word, which was from the beginning, who existed from all eternity, as a divine person, as the Son of God, co-eternal with the Father; as the eternal choice made in him, and the everlasting covenant with him show; and who in his office capacity, as Mediator, was set up from everlasting; and who, with respect to the virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, was from the beginning of the world, and was the same yesterday, today, and for ever; it being by his blood that all the patriarchs, from the beginning of time, were pardoned, and by his righteousness they were justified, and by his grace they were saved; all which, respecting the antiquity of Christ's person, office, and grace, was known to these fathers: they knew him, so as to approve of him, trust in him, and appropriate him to themselves, and which obliged them to the new commandment of love, not only to God and Christ, but to one another; and the reason here given, engaging to it, is

exceeding suitable to their character, it being what fathers and aged men delight in, even ancient things, to call them to remembrance, to talk of them as things well known unto them; but nothing is more ancient than what is here instanced in, and nothing so honourable and profitable to know as this, or to be gloried in; and therefore the argument from hence to love those that belong to him, who is the everlasting Father, is very strong and forcible.

*I write unto you, young men;* who are warm and zealous for God, for his cause and interest, for the glory of a Redeemer, for his truths and ordinances; and are lively in the exercise of grace, and fervent in the discharge of duty; and are active, diligent, and industrious, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and are strong and robust, able to go alone, to walk by faith, being strong in it, and in the grace that is in Christ, and do not need the staff that old age does, nor the hand to lead and teach to go, as children do: to these the apostle writes the new commandment of love, for this reason,

*because ye have overcome the wicked one;* Satan, who is eminently so, being the first that was, and the worst that is so; for he is wickedness itself, he is wholly, entirely, immutably, and unalterably wicked; and his whole work and employment is in wickedness. Now these young men had overcome him, not only in Christ their head, who has spoiled him, destroyed him, and led him captive in triumph, in whom they were more than conquerors; but in themselves, through the power of divine grace, holding up, and making use of the shield of faith against him, whereby they quenched his fiery darts, and got the victory over him: and this is also said in perfect agreement with the character of young men, who are apt to glory in their strength, and are fond of getting the advantage, or a victory over others; and which is used to teach such as are so in a spiritual sense, not to glory in their strength, but in the Lord; and to love him whom they know, and whose lovingkindness is exercised towards them, and in Christ; and to love him through whom they get the victory, and to bear the infirmities of weaker saints, to whom they should be strongly affected.

*I write unto you, little children;* or babes in Christ, such as were newborn babes, just born again, not able to go alone, or walk by faith, but were dandled on the knee, and lay at the breasts of divine consolation: could speak but stammeringly, and not plain, it being as much as they could do to

say “Abba”, Father. To these the apostle writes, and urges the new commandment of love, for this reason,

*because ye have known the Father*: the Father of Christ, and him, as their Father in Christ, under the witnessings of the spirit of adoption; so as, in some good measure, to hope and believe he was their Father, and to love, honour, and obey him as such, to apply to him for whatever they stood in need of, and always to put themselves under his care and protection: and a consideration of this their relation to him, and interest in him, is a strong and prevailing argument why they should not only love him, their Father, and Christ, who is begotten of him, but also all the saints, who are the children of this their Father, and their brethren; and very aptly does the apostle mention their knowledge of the Father as suitable to their age and character, it being one of the first and most necessary things for a child to know.

**Ver. 14.** *I have written unto you, fathers*, &c.] This, with the reason annexed to it, is repeated, to raise the attention of the aged servants of Christ, and to quicken them to a discharge of their duty, who are apt to abate in their zeal, to grow lukewarm and indifferent, to cleave to the world, and to the things of it, which they are cautioned against in (<sup>ἄλλοις</sup> 1 John 2:15). The whole of this, with the reason,

*because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning*, is left out in the Vulgate Latin version, and Complutensian edition.

*I have written unto you, young men*; this repetition to them, with some additions, is also made, to stir them up the more to love the saints, who are too apt to be carried away with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, warned against in (<sup>ἄλλοις</sup> 1 John 2:16);

*because ye are strong*; not naturally, for sin has sadly weakened human nature, so that a man, by the strength of nature, can do nothing that is spiritually good: nor in themselves, though regenerated, but in Christ, in whom are righteousness and strength; without whom they can do nothing, though they can do all things through him strengthening them; and so are strong in the exercise of grace on him, and in the performance of every duty, being strengthened by him with strength in their souls:

*and the word of God abideth in you*; either Christ the Logos, the essential Word of God, who might be said to be in them, and abide in them, because his grace was implanted in their hearts, called Christ, formed there, and

because he dwelt in their hearts by faith, and lived in them; and hence they had their strength, or came to be so strong as they were, and also overcame Satan, because he that was in them was greater than he that is in the world: or else the Gospel is meant, which cometh not in word only, but in power, has a place in the heart, and works effectually, and dwells richly there; and this is a means of spiritual strength against sin and temptation, and to perform duty, and to stand fast in the truth against the errors and heresies of men and is that piece of spiritual armour, the sword of the Spirit, by which Satan is often foiled, and overcome: hence it follows,

*and ye have overcome the wicked one;* (see Gill on “<sup>אֲנִי</sup>1 John 2:13”).

**Ver. 15.** *Love not the world,* &c.] The habitable earth, the world in which men live; this is not to be loved by saints, as if it was their habitation, where they are always to be, and so loath to remove from it, seeing they are but sojourners, and pilgrims, and strangers here; this is not their rest, nor dwellingplace, their continuing city, or proper country, that is heaven. Nor should they love the men of the world, who are as they came into it, are of it, and mind the things of it, and lie in wickedness, and are wicked men; for though these are to be loved, as men, as fellow creatures, and their good, both spiritual and temporal, is to be sought, and good is to be done to them, as much as lies in our power, both with respect to soul and body; yet their company is not to be chosen, and preferred to the saints, but to be shunned and avoided, as disagreeable and dangerous; their evil conversation, and wicked communications, are not to be loved, but abhorred, and their works of darkness are to be reprov'd; nor are their ways to be imitated, and their customs followed, or their manners to be conformed unto:

*neither the things [that are] in the world;* good men that are in the world, though they are not of the world, are to be loved; and the kingdom of Christ, though it is not of the world, yet it is in the world, and is to be regarded and promoted to the uttermost; and there are the natural and civil things of the world, called this world's goods, which may be loved within due bounds, and used in a proper manner, though they are not to be loved inordinately and abused. This is the character of worldly men; so the Jews call such, *hzh ןל װא יבחה*, “such that love world”<sup>f31</sup>. Near relations and friends in the world, and the blessings of life, may be loved and enjoyed in their way, but not above God and Christ, or so as to take up satisfaction and contentment in them, to make idols of them, and put trust and

confidence in them, and prefer them to spiritual and heavenly things, and be so taken with them, as to be unconcerned for, and careless about the other; but the evil things of the world, or at least the evil use of them, and affection for them, are here intended, as appears from the following verse. Now it is chiefly with respect to the fathers, and young men, that this exhortation is given; and the repetition of what is said to them before is made, to introduce this; which is exceeding suitable to their age and characters. Old men are apt to be covetous, and love the world and worldly things, just when they are going out of it, and about to leave them; and young men are apt to be carried away with lust, vanity, ambition, and pride: and therefore, from each of these, the apostle dissuades, from the following arguments,

*if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*; that is, “the love of God”, as the Alexandrian copy and the Ethiopic version read; who is the Father of Christ, and of all the elect in him; and who is indeed, by creation, the Father of all men, the Father of spirits, of the souls of men, and of angels, and the Father of mercies and of lights, and by the love of him is meant, either the love with which he loves his people, and which being shed abroad in the heart, attracts the soul to himself, and causes it to love him above the world, and all things in it; and such an one esteems of it, and an interest in it, more than life, and all the enjoyments of it, and is by it loosened to the world, and sets light by it, and can part with all good things in it, and suffer all evil things cheerfully, under the constraints and influence of this love; so that it is a clear case, that when the affections of men are set upon the world, and they are glued to the things of it, their hearts are not warmed with a sense of the love of God, or, that is not sensibly in them, or shed abroad in their hearts: or else by the love of God is meant love to God, which is inconsistent with the love of the world, or with such an inordinate love of mammon, as to serve it; for a man may as soon serve two masters, as serve God and mammon, which he can never do truly, faithfully, and affectionately; and which also is not consistent with friendship with the men of the world, or a conversation and fellowship with them in things that are evil, whether superstition or profaneness; (see ~~4021~~ Matthew 6:24 ~~3004~~ James 4:4).

**Ver. 16.** *For all that [is] in the world, &c.*] This is the sum of the evil things in the world; or these following are the objects of sin in the world, or about which wicked men are conversant; even such as are carnal or grateful to the flesh, visible to the eye, and belong to this vain life, or serve

to fill with pride and vanity; or these are the main things, which men that love the world most highly value and esteem:

*the lust of the flesh*; by which is meant, not lust in general, or concupiscence, the corruption of nature, which is the fountain of all sin, or indwelling sin, the flesh, or that corrupt principle which lusts against the Spirit; nor the various lusts of the flesh, fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, and which are many, and are also called worldly lusts; but some particular one, “a lust of the body”, as the Syriac version reads; either the lust of uncleanness, which includes all unchaste desires, thoughts, words, and actions, fornication, adultery, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; and which make up a considerable part of the all that is in the world: or else intemperance in eating and drinking, gluttony and drunkenness, excess of wine, surfeitings, rioting, and revellings, and all the sensual pleasures of life, by which the carnal mind, and the lusts of it, are gratified; whereby the soul is destroyed, the body is dishonoured, and a wound, dishonour, and reproach brought on the character, not to be removed; for which reasons the world, and the things of it, are not to be loved: the next follows,

*the lust of the eyes*: after unlawful objects, and may design unchaste and lascivious looks, eyes full of adultery, and whereby adultery is committed; (see <sup><4183></sup>Matthew 5:28); but then this falls in with the other, unless that be confined to intemperance; rather then this may intend a sinful curiosity of seeing vain sights, and shows, with which the eye of man is never satisfied, (<sup><2108></sup>Ecclesiastes 1:8); and against which the psalmist prays, (<sup><4337></sup>Psalm 119:37), or rather the sin of covetousness is here designed, the objects of which are visible things, as gold, silver, houses, lands, and possessions, with which riches the eyes of men are never satisfied, and which sin is drawn forth and cherished by the eyes; and indeed a covetous man has little more satisfaction than the beholding his substance with his eyes, and in which he takes much sinful pleasure; (see <sup><2108></sup>Ecclesiastes 4:8 5:11); and what a poor vain empty thing is this! therefore, love not the world, since this is a principal thing in it: as is also

*the pride of life*; by which seems to be meant, ambition of honour, of chief places and high titles, as in the Scribes and Pharisees, (<sup><4126></sup>Matthew 23:6,7), or of grand living, for the word signifies not so much life as living; living in a sumptuous, gay, luxurious, and pompous manner, in rich diet, costly apparel, having fine seats, palaces, and stately buildings, and

numerous attendance; all which is but vanity and vexation of spirit; (see ~~200~~ Ecclesiastes 2:1,3-8,11). The Syriac and Arabic versions read, “the pride of the age”; and every age has some peculiar things in which the pride of it appears. Now neither of these

*is of the Father*; of God the Father, as the Ethiopic version reads; the things which are desired and lusted after are of God, but not the lust itself; God is not the author of sin, nor is it agreeable to his will:

*but is of the world*; of the men of it, and agreeable to their carnal minds; and is a reason why things of the world are not to be loved by the saints, who are not of it, but chosen and called out of it; and besides, all these things are mean, base, vile, and contemptible, and unworthy of their love and affection.

**Ver. 17.** *And the world passeth away*, &c.] Not the matter and substance, but the fashion, form, and scheme of it, (~~403~~ 1 Corinthians 7:31); kingdoms, cities, towns, houses, families, estates, and possessions, are continually changing, and casting into different hands, and different forms; the men of the world, the inhabitants of it, are continually removing; one generation goes, and another comes, new faces are continually appearing; the riches and honours of the world are fading, perishing, and transitory things; everything is upon the flux, nothing is permanent; which is another argument why the world, and the things of it, are not to be loved:

*and the lust thereof*; also passes away; and objects of lust are fading and fleeting, as beauty, and riches, and honours; these are continually taking away from men, or men are taken away from them, and will not be hereafter; and even the pleasure of lust itself passes away as soon as enjoyed; the pleasures of sin are but for a season, and a very short one; and are indeed but imaginary, and leave a real bitterness and sorrow behind them, and at length bring a man to ruin and destruction:

*but he that doeth the will of God*; not perfectly as contained in the law, which is the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God; for no man can do that in such a manner, though a regenerate man desires to do it, even as it is done in heaven, and serves the law of God with his mind, and under the influence of the Spirit of God; and does walk in his statutes, and keeps his judgments from a principle of love, in faith, and without mercenary views and sinister ends, without depending on what he does for life and salvation; and such an one may be said to be a doer of the will of God:

though rather here it intends such an one as believes in Christ, as the propitiation for his sins, and as his advocate with the Father, and who, makes Christ his pattern and example, and walks as he walked; and particularly observes the new commandment of love, loves God, and Christ, and his fellow Christians, and not the world, and the things of it: and such a man is happy, for he

*abideth for ever*; in the love of God, which will never depart from him, nor shall he be separated from that; and in the hands and arms of Christ, out of which none can pluck him; and in the family and household of God, where he, as a son, abides for ever, and shall never be cast out; and in a state of justification, and shall never enter into condemnation; and in a state of grace and holiness, from whence he shall never fall totally and finally; and in heaven with Christ to all eternity: the reason of this his abiding is not his doing the will of God, which is only descriptive of him manifestatively, and not the cause of his perpetuity and immovableness; but his eternal election of God, which stands sure, not on the foot of works, but of him that calleth; and the covenant of grace in which he is interested, and which is immovable, sure, firm, and inviolable; and the foundation Jesus Christ, on which he is built; and the principle of grace in him, which always remains, and is connected with eternal life.

**Ver. 18.** *Little children, it is the last time*, &c.] Or hour; not of the Jewish civil and church state, for that had been at an end for some time; this epistle was written some years after the destruction of Jerusalem; nor the last hour of the Gospel dispensation, or world to come, for this was but the first age of that; and much less the last hour of time, or of the present world itself, for that has been many hundreds of years since; but the last hour of the apostolic age. All the apostles were now dead, John was the last of them; perilous times were now coming on, impostors and heretics were rising apace, against which the apostle cautions his little children; and so still he writes to them, agreeably to their age and character, who, being such, were most likely to be imposed upon by those who lie in wait to deceive.

*And as ye have heard that antichrist shall come*; or “is coming”; and begins to show himself in the false teachers and deceivers, who were his forerunners; and this they had heard and understood, either from the words of Christ in (<sup><RB></sup>John 5:43); or from the account the Apostle Paul gave to the Thessalonians concerning him, (<sup><SB></sup>2 Thessalonians 2:3,4,7-10); or rather it may be from what, the apostle had said to the elders of the church

at Ephesus, where the Apostle John now was, when he met them at Miletus, (<sup><411B></sup>Acts 20:29,30),

*even now there are many antichrists.* The Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, “false Christs”; but such are not intended here, that set up for Messiahs, whom Christ foretold should arise before the destruction of Jerusalem, (<sup><412B></sup>Matthew 24:24); for that was now over, and those false Christs had arisen and were gone: if this sense could be admitted, Bar Cocab, in Adrian's time, bids fair to be the false Christ, or Messiah, in the preceding clause, as the same versions there read; but such as were adversaries of Christ, as the Arabic version renders it, are meant, who set themselves against Christ, and were opposers of his person, incarnation, and office; who either denied that he was the Christ, or that he was come in the flesh, the truth of his incarnation, or his proper deity, or real humanity, such as Ebion, Cerinthus, and others. The apostle might well say there were many, since in his time were the followers of Simon Magus, the Menandrians, Saturnilians, Basilidians, Nicolaites, Gnostics, Carpocratians, Cerinthians, Ebionites, and Nazarenes, as reckoned up by Epiphanius. And hence we learn, that antichrist is not one single individual, but many; antichrist in the former clause is explained by antichrists in this; (see <sup><412></sup>1 John 2:22 4:1,3 2 John 7); and though the popes of Rome are, by way of eminence, the antichrist that should come, and which those deceivers were the forerunners of, and paved the way for; yet they are not the only antichrists, there were others before them, and there are many now besides them.

*Whereby we know that it is the last time;* the pure apostolic age was now going off, with the doctrines, discipline, and worship of it, which was easy to be discerned by the multitude of antichrists which now appeared; and it may well be thought to be the last time, or near the end of things with us, since almost every heresy is revived among us.

**Ver. 19.** *They went out from us, &c.]* Which intends not the persons that went down from Judea to Antioch, (<sup><415B></sup>Acts 15:1,24), who preached destructive doctrines to the Gentiles, which the apostles and the church of Judea disowned and censured; by which it appeared, that all the preachers of these doctrines were not of them, and of the same mind with them: for this sense makes these antichrists to be only preachers; whereas, though many of them might be such, yet not all; for whoever, in a private capacity denied the Father and the Son, or that Christ was come in the flesh, was

antichrist; and to these private believers are opposed in (~~612~~1 John 2:20); and it also makes the “us” to be the apostles, whereas they were all dead but John; and these antichrists were men that had risen up then in the last time, and therefore could not, with propriety, be said to go out from the apostles; besides, whenever the apostle uses this pronoun “us”, he includes with himself all true believers, and may more especially here intend the churches of Asia; or rather the members of the church at Ephesus, where he was; nor is it likely he should have in view the church of Judea, and a case in which that was concerned near forty years ago: moreover, such a sense makes the going out to be merely local and corporeal, and which is in itself not criminal; the persons that went from Judea to Antioch were not blamable for going thither, nor for going out from the apostles thither, but for troubling the disciples with words, to the subverting of their souls; nor was a corporeal departure from the apostles any evidence of not being of the same mind with them; for they often departed one from other, yet continued of the same mind, and in the same faith: but the sense is, that there were some persons in the Apostle John's time, who had made a profession of religion, were members of the church, and some of them perhaps preachers, and yet they departed from the faith, and dropped their profession of it, and withdrew themselves from the church, or churches to which they belonged, and set up separate assemblies of their own:

*but they were not of us:* they were of the church, and of the same mind with it, at least in profession, antecedent to their going out; for had they not been in communion with the church, they could not be properly said to go out of it; and if they had not been of the same mind and faith in profession, they could not be said to depart from it; but they were not truly regenerated by the grace of God, and so apparently were not of the number, of God's elect: notwithstanding their profession and communion with the church, they were of the world, and not of God; they were not true believers; they had not that anointing which abides, and from which persons are truly denominated Christians, or anointed ones:

*for if they had been of us, they would [no doubt] have continued with us;* in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the fellowship of the church, as true believers do: if their hearts had been right with God, they would have remained steadfast to him, his Gospel, truths, and ordinances, and faithful with his saints; for such who are truly regenerate are born of an incorruptible seed, and those that have received the anointing which makes them truly Christians, that abides, as does every true grace, faith, hope, and

love; and such who are truly God's elect cannot possibly fall into such errors and heresies as these did, and be finally deceived, as they were:

*but [they went out]*; “they went out from us”, so the Syriac version reads; *that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us*; the word “all” is left out in the Syriac version. The defection and apostasy of these persons were permitted by God, that it might appear they had never received the grace of God in truth; and their going out was in such a manner, that it was a certain argument that they were not of the elect; since they became antichrists, denied the deity or sonship of Christ, or that he was come in the flesh, or that he was the Christ, and therefore are said to be of the world, and not of God, (<sup><1022></sup>1 John 2:22 4:1,3-6), so that this passage furnishes out no argument against the saints' perseverance, which is confirmed in (<sup><1021></sup>1 John 2:20).

**Ver. 20.** *But ye have an unction from the Holy One*, &c.] Meaning the Spirit, and his graces, with which Christ, the head, is anointed without measure, and his members in measure; from whence he is called Christ, and they Christians. These were really the Lord's anointed ones; they were true believers; were the wise virgins who had oil in their vessels with their lamps, which would never go out. The grace of the Spirit is called a chrism, or an ointment, or an anointing, in allusion to the anointing oil under the law; (see Gill on “<sup><1018></sup>Matthew 25:3”); of which anointing oil the Jews say <sup>f32</sup>, that it continues all of it, *awbl dyt [I*, “to time to come”, (i.e. to the times of the Messiah,) as it is said, (<sup><1018></sup>Exodus 30:31). Now this these saints had, “from the Holy One”; or that Holy One; meaning, not the Holy Spirit of God, though it is true that this anointing, or these graces, were from him; he is the author of them, and may truly be said to anoint with them; nor the Father, who is holy in his nature, and in his works, and is the God of all grace, and is said to anoint the saints too, (<sup><1021></sup>2 Corinthians 1:21), but rather the Lord Jesus Christ, who is holy, both as God and man, and from whose fulness all grace is had. This oil, or ointment, was first poured on him without measure, and from him it descends to all the members of his mystical body, as the ointment poured on Aaron's head descended to his beard, and to the skirts of his garments; (see <sup><1022></sup>1 John 2:27);

*and ye know all things*; for this anointing is a teaching one; it makes persons of quick understanding; it enlightens their understandings,

refreshes their memories, and strengthens all the powers and faculties of the soul; it leads into the knowledge of all spiritual things, into all the mysteries of grace, and truths of the Gospel, into all things necessary for salvation; for these words are not to be taken in the largest sense, in which they are only applicable to the omniscient God, but to be restrained to the subject matter treated of, and to those things chiefly in which the antichrists and deceivers cited; and regard not a perfect knowledge, for those that know most of these things, under the influence of this unction, know but in part. The Syriac version reads, “all men”, and so refers to that discerning of spirits, of the Spirit of truth, from the spirit of error; a gift which was bestowed on many in the primitive times, by which they could distinguish hypocrites from true believers, and antichrists and deceivers from the faithful ministers of the word. One of Stephens's copies reads, “and ye all know”.

**Ver. 21.** *I have not written unto you, &c.*] Either this epistle, or rather what particularly here regards those apostates from the truth, in order to shun them and not be deceived by them: the apostle here obviates an objection that he saw might be made upon what he last said, that they knew all things; and, if so, why then did he write the things he did, since they knew them before? to which he answers, that he did not write to them as to ignorant, but as to knowing persons:

*because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it:* the Father, who is the God of truth; Christ, who is truth itself; and the Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth; and the Gospel, which is the word of truth; and the Scriptures, which are the Scriptures of truth, and from whence truth is to be fetched, and by them to be confirmed and defended; and which, if they had not known, it would have been to no purpose for him to have written to them about the antichrists that were come into the world; and though they did know the truth, it was very proper to put them in remembrance of it, and to establish them in it, against these deceivers, which supposes former knowledge of it:

*and that no lie is of the truth;* either springs from it, or is according to it, but just the reverse. The apostle has respect to the errors and heresies of the above apostates, which were flagrant contradictions to the Gospel, and as distant from it as a lie is to truth; and of such lies, and of those liars, he speaks in the next verses. The Arabic version reads, “and that every liar is not of the truth”.

**Ver. 22.** *Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? &c.]*

Or that very Christ, and true Messiah, who was spoken of by all the prophets, since the beginning of the world, and so much, and so long desired by the Old Testament saints: he that denies that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of the prophets, is not indeed the only liar in the world, but he is the greatest of liars; this is a consummate lie, being opposed to a glaring truth, to a fact clear and indisputable; and which rests not merely on the testimony of Jesus, who is truth itself, and who, in express words, more than once, declared and asserted himself to be the Christ; but all the characters of the Messiah, everything that is said of him in the Prophets, meet in Jesus, and the miracles which were done by him are flagrant proofs and undeniable evidences of his being the Christ of God; and all the apostles believed, and were sure that he was Christ, the Son of the living God: to which may be added the testimony of John, who was sent, and came to bear witness of him, and did; and who was a prophet, and a man of great probity and integrity. But there was a greater witness than he; even God himself, by a voice from heaven, bore a testimony to him; and angels, at his incarnation, declared him to be the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord; yea, the devil himself, who is a liar, and the father of lies in other things, knew and owned Jesus to be the Christ; so that those that deny him are the worst of liars, even worse than the devil himself. This may have regard not only to the Jews, that deny Jesus to be the Messiah, but chiefly to such who went by the name of Christians; who denied either his proper deity, or real humanity, as Ebion and Cerinthus, which was denying him to be the God-man, the Mediator, and Messiah; and is true of all such that deny him in any of his offices, or in things relating to them, as his Gospel, and any of the peculiar doctrines of it, delivered by him, and so deny his prophetic office; or any of his ordinances, institutions, and appointments, as lawgiver in his house, and King of saints, and so deny him in his kingly office; or reject him as the alone Saviour, joining their own works with him, in the business of salvation, and oppose his sacrifice and satisfaction, and despise his imputed righteousness, and so deny him in his priestly office. Now these are some of the liars, and these some of the doctrinal lies, which are not of the truth, as in (~~1~~ John 2:21).

*He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son:* that denies the Father of Christ to be the Creator of the world, but asserts that it was made by angels, as some ancient heretics did; or that the Father of Christ is not the God of the Old Testament, as Marcion; or that denies that God is the

Father of Christ, and that Christ is the Son of God; who will not allow that there is any such relation in nature between them; who affirm that Christ is only the Son of God by adoption, or because of his love to him, or because of his incarnation and resurrection from the dead; or that he is not his true and proper Son, only in a figurative and metaphorical sense; that he is not the natural and eternally begotten Son of God, only by office, and as Mediator, and that God is only his Father, as having installed him into an office; or he that denies that these two are distinct from each other, but affirms that Father is the Son, and the Son is the Father, and so confounds them both, and, by confounding both, denies that there are either Father or Son; and all such persons are antichrists, or opposers of Christ.

**Ver. 23.** *Whosoever denieth the Son,* &c.] Jesus Christ to be the true, proper, natural, essential, and eternal Son of God:

*the same hath not the Father;* or does not hold the Father; or “believe the Father”, as the Syriac version renders it; for there cannot be a father without a son; and he that honours not the Son, by owning him as such, honours not the Father; whatever reflects dishonour on the Son, reflects dishonour on the Father. If Christ is not truly and properly the Son of God, the Father is not truly and properly the Father of Christ; if Christ is only a Son in a figurative and metaphorical sense, the Father is only a Father in a figurative and metaphorical sense; if Christ is a Son only by office, then the Father is a Father only by office, which is monstrously stupid. Such an one does not hold the true doctrine of the Father, and does not appear to have true faith in him, true love unto him, or real interest in him, only by profession:

*[but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also]:* this clause is left out in many copies, and stands as a supplement in our version; but is in the Alexandrian copy, in four of Beza's manuscripts, and in some others; and in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions; and confirms and illustrates what is before said; for as he that denies the sonship of Christ cannot hold the paternity of God, so he that owns the sonship of Christ, the second Person, maintains the paternity of the first; for these two are correlates, and mutually put, or take away each other: no mention is made of the Spirit, because, as yet, no controversy had risen concerning him.

**Ver. 24.** *Let that therefore abide in you,* &c.] Meaning the word of God, (<sup>1</sup>John 2:14); the Gospel of Christ, which there was reason to believe had a place in their hearts, and which they had embraced and professed;

and therefore the apostle exhorts them to perseverance in it; and particularly not to let go the doctrine concerning the Father and the Son, and this their relation to each other, which is the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the distinct personality of Father, Son, and Spirit; the contrary to which leaves the three without either name, or distinction from each other: the arguments to enforce this exhortation follow,

*which ye have heard from the beginning*; they had heard it not externally only, but internally; they had hearkened to it, and from the heart obeyed it; they had mixed it with faith, and received the love of it; they had heard it from the apostles of Christ, who were eye and ear witnesses of the word; and this they had heard at the first preaching of the Gospel to them, at the first of their conversion: the apostles of Christ began their ministry with the sonship of Christ, and greatly insisted on it, in it, and required a profession of it before baptism, and which was made in order to it; and these believers had been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, as standing in such a relation to each other; (see ~~400~~ Acts 9:20 8:37 ~~400~~ Matthew 28:19); and therefore ought not to relinquish this truth, and receive a new and upstart notion: and for further encouragement to continue in it, it is added,

*if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*; as those that are once in either always will; what is here said is not either the cause or condition of men being in the Father, and in the Son, or of their continuance in them, but is descriptive of the persons that are in them, and is an open and manifest evidence of their being and continuance in them. Such are in union with Christ, and at times enjoy sensible communion with him, and shall never be finally and totally removed from it; they are in the love of Christ, from whence there is no separations, and in the arms and hands of Christ, out of which none can pluck them; and they abide by him in the exercise of faith and love, and cleave unto him with full purpose of heart, and will hold on and out, professing his name to the end: and they are, and abide in the love of God the Father, which is from everlasting to everlasting; and in the covenant of his grace, which is sure and inviolable; and in the participation of all the blessings and promises of it, among which, the following one, eternal life, is a principal one.

**Ver. 25.** *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, &c.*] Either God the Father, who is that God that cannot lie, who in the covenant of his grace, before the world began, made this promise unto his people,

*[even] eternal life*; which promise, with all others, was put into the hands of Christ, where, with them, it is yea and amen; and also the thing itself promised, where it is hid, and lies safe and secure: or the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has promised it in the Gospel; for this is the sum of the Gospel declaration, that whoever believes in him shall have everlasting life; and this lies in the knowledge of the Father, and of the Son, and in the enjoyment of them, and conformity to them; wherefore the doctrine respecting them ought to be retained, and firmly adhered to.

**Ver. 26.** *These [things] have I written unto you, &c.]* The little children, who were most likely to be imposed upon by antichrists and deceivers:

*concerning them that seduce you.* The Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions render it, “for them that seduce you”; not that they were actually seduced and carried away with the error of the wicked; for though God’s elect may be staggered and waver, and be tossed to and fro by false teachers, and their doctrines, yet they cannot be totally and finally deceived: but the sense is, these men endeavoured to seduce them: they lay in wait to deceive, and attempted to deceive them, by walking in craftiness, and handling the word of God deceitfully; and therefore that they might be known, and so shunned and avoided, the apostle points them out, and shows who they are; that they are such who deny that Jesus is the Christ, and do not own neither the Father nor the Son; in doing which he acted the part of a tender Father, a faithful shepherd, and a careful monitor.

**Ver. 27.** *But the anointing which ye have received of him, &c.]* The Spirit, and the grace of the Spirit, which they had received out of the fulness of grace which is in Christ; and is compared to oil or ointment; (see Gill on “~~1~~1 John 2:20”); for Christ, the anointed, is the fountain of it all, and it is had from him in a way of giving and receiving. So the second “Sephira”, or number in the Jews’ Cabalistic tree, which is wisdom, has for one of its surnames, the fountain of the oil of unction <sup>f33</sup> this

*abideth in you*; the Syriac and Arabic versions render it, “if it abideth”, which spoils the text, for the words are not conditional, but affirmative: grace is an internal thing, it is oil in the vessel of the heart, and where it once is, it abides; as does every grace of the Spirit, as faith, hope, love, and every other: grace can never be taken away; God will not take it away, where he has once bestowed it, and men and devils cannot; it can never be lost as to the principle and being of it; it is an incorruptible seed, and a living principle, which can never be destroyed, notwithstanding all the

corruptions in a man's hart, the pollutions of the world, and the temptations of Satan:

*and ye need not that any man teach you*; not that they were perfect in knowledge, for no man is absolutely, only comparatively so, in this life; or that they needed not, and were above and exempt from the instructions of Christ's faithful servants; for John himself taught them, and to teach and instruct them was the end of his writing this epistle to them; but the sense is either that they needed not the teachings of these men before mentioned, the antichrists, liars, and seducers, being better taught, and having an unction by which they knew all things; or they needed not to be taught as if they were babes in Christ, as unskilful in the word of righteousness, but so as to increase in spiritual knowledge, and go on to perfection, and be established in the present truths, at least so as to be put in remembrance of them; or rather they needed not, nor were they to regard any mere human revelation and doctrine, for the whole Gospel was come by Jesus Christ, and no other is to be expected or received by men, nor any doctrine but what is according to the revelation of Christ; wherefore saints under the Gospel dispensation are taught of God by his Spirit, according to the word of truth, and by the ministry of it, and have no need of learning every man from his neighbour, or from his brother, any separate revelation; so that this passage does not militate against the external ministry of the Gospel, or human teachings according to that perfect rule and declaration of the whole mind and will of God by Christ under the Gospel dispensation:

*but as the same anointing*. The Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions read, "his anointing"; that is, God's or Christ's; and so the Syriac version renders it, "that unction which is of God"; meaning the same as before: the Ethiopic version renders it, his Spirit, which, though not a true version, is no improper or impertinent sense of the phrase: and this

*teacheth you of all things*; truths and doctrines necessary to salvation, as in (<sup>122</sup>1 John 2:20);

*and is truth, and is no lie*; or true and not a liar; which is a just character of the spirit of truth, in opposition to the spirit of error; and holds good of the grace of the Spirit, which is truth in the inward parts, and is genuine and sincere:

*and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him*; in Christ, from whom they received this anointing, (see Gill on "<sup>123</sup>1 John 2:24"); or in the

anointing itself, in the grace of the Spirit, in which they stood. Some versions read in the imperative, abide in him, or it, as in (~~1~~1 John 2:28).

**Ver. 28.** *And now, little children, abide in him,* &c.] The apostle having finished his separate instructions exhortations to the fathers, young men and children, returns to the whole body of the saints in general, whom he addresses, as in (~~1~~1 John 2:1,12); under the name of little children; (see Gill on "~~1~~1 John 2:1"); and whom he exhorts to abide in Christ, that is, in the exercise of faith on him, of hope in him, and love to him; and to hold to him the head, and to hold fast his word and Gospel, and abide by his truth and ordinances, and adhere to his cause and interest, and not to be moved away on any consideration; to which the following encouragement is given:

*that when he shall appear;* that is, Christ, who is now hid, and out of the sight of bodily eyes, is in heaven, at the right hand of God; but ere long he will appear a second time, and not only to those that look for him, but even every eye shall see him; and his appearance will be a glorious one, and his saints shall appear in glory with him, and shall be like him, and see him as he is:

*we may have confidence;* boldness or freedom, as now at the throne of grace, so then at the throne of judgment; where the saints will stand with courage and intrepidity, when the wicked will flee to the rocks and mountains, being filled with amazement, terror, and trembling:

*and not be ashamed before him at his coming;* they will not be put to shame by him; nor will they be ashamed of their confidence, faith, hope, and expectation; their hope will not make them ashamed, for they will now enjoy what they hoped for; and, notwithstanding all their sins and infirmities, they will not be ashamed, for they will have on the wedding garment, the righteousness of Christ, and will stand before the throne without fault, spot, or blemish; nor will Christ be ashamed of them who have not been ashamed of him and his words, but have confessed him, and have been faithful unto death, and have cleaved to him and his cause with full purpose of heart to the end. Some think ministers of the Gospel are here meant, who, when those that are under their care abide faithful, and persevere to the end, will give up their account with joy; and will have what they have expressed confidence in, and will have their expectations answered, and not disappointed, by having such souls as their joy and crown of rejoicing.

**Ver. 29.** *If ye know that he is righteous*, &c.] That is, Christ, who is righteous as God in his nature and in his works; and as man in his obedience, life, and conversation; and as Mediator, in faithfully discharging the work he undertook; and is the author of an everlasting righteousness, which is imputed by God, revealed in the Gospel, and received by faith; all which they knew, for this is not said as doubting, but rather as taking it for granted that they did know it; “if”, or “seeing ye know”, &c. then it follows;

*ye know*, or “know ye”; ye may assure yourselves,

*that everyone that doeth righteousness*; not merely works of righteousness, especially in order to justify him before God; for such an one is so far from being born of God, or born again, that he is manifestly in a state of nature, and of opposition to, and enmity against God; he is not subject to him, he does not submit to the righteousness of God, but goes about to establish his own and betrays his ignorance and want grace; but it intends such an one who with the heart believes unto righteousness, and lays hold by faith, and lives upon the righteousness of Christ for justification; and who performs, good, works in faith, and from a principle of love, not to obtain a justifying righteousness, but because he is justified by the righteousness of Christ: and: such an one

*is born of him*; either of God, or rather, of Christ; being regenerated by his Spirit, having his, grace implanted in him, as appears by his faith in his righteousness and by his works of righteousness, as fruits of faith; and having his image stamped on him, and he himself formed in him, and so made like unto him; by all which it is evident he is one of his spiritual seed and offspring. The Syriac version reads, “is of him”; belongs to him, is one of his; and this makes way for what is said of adoption in the following chapter and which should begin here.

# CHAPTER 3

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN 3

In this chapter the apostle exhorts to a holy life and conversation in general, and to the exercise of brotherly love in particular. The former of these is urged from the consideration of the great blessing of adoption, which springs from the free love and favour of God, is unknown to the men of the world, and indeed, in the present state of things, does not appear to the saints themselves in all its fulness and advantages, as it will do in the future state, when the children of God will be like to Christ, and see him as he is; the hope of which should engage them to purity of life and conversation, ([1 John 3:1-3](#)), and this is further enforced from the nature of sin, which is a transgression of the law, ([1 John 3:4](#)), from the end of Christ's manifestation in the flesh, which was to take away sin, and who was without it, ([1 John 3:5](#)), from communion with Christ, expressed by abiding in him, seeing and knowing him, which such must be strangers to that live a sinful course of life, ([1 John 3:6](#)), from this, that only such that do righteousness are righteous persons, and these are righteous as Christ is, ([1 John 3:7](#)), and from a man's being of the devil, that is, of a vicious conversation, who was a sinner from the beginning, and whose works Christ was manifested in the flesh to destroy, ([1 John 3:8](#)), and from the nature of the new man, or that which is born of God, which is not to sin, nor can it, ([1 John 3:9](#)), and from the distinction there is between the children of God and the children of the devil, those not being of God who do not righteousness, nor love their brethren, ([1 John 3:10](#)), from hence the apostle passes to brotherly love, and excites and engages to that, from its being a message which had been heard from the beginning, ([1 John 3:11](#)), which is illustrated by its contrary in the instance of Cain, who by the instigation of Satan slew his brother, because his works were righteous, and his own were evil, ([1 John 3:12](#)), wherefore, it is no wonder that good men should be hated by the world, who, as Cain, are of the same wicked one, ([1 John 3:13](#)), brotherly love is further urged unto, from its being an evidence of passing from death to life, or of regeneration; whereas he that hates his brother openly continues in a state of death, is a murderer, and so has not eternal life abiding in him,

(<sup>1</sup>John 3:14,15), and from the great instance of Christ's love, in laying down his life for his people, the saints are incited to lay down their lives for one another; to such a pitch does the apostle carry brotherly love, (<sup>1</sup>John 3:16), wherefore, he that is rich, and is uncompassionate to his brother in distress, cannot be thought to have the love of God dwelling in him, (<sup>1</sup>John 3:17), hence he presses the exhortation to brotherly love, that it be not in profession only, but true, real, and cordial, (<sup>1</sup>John 3:18), and that by observing the advantages of it, as that hereby men know they are of the truth, and can assure their hearts before God; and which is illustrated by the contrary, the condemnation of the heart, (<sup>1</sup>John 3:19,20), the advantages of non-condemnation of the heart are confidence before God, and receiving whatsoever we ask of him; the reason of which is, because his commandments are kept, and things done which are pleasing to him, (<sup>1</sup>John 3:21,22), the commandments are explained of faith in Christ, and love to one another, (<sup>1</sup>John 3:23), and the happiness of them that do them is, that Christ dwells in them, and they in him, the evidence of which is, the Spirit that is given unto them, (<sup>1</sup>John 3:24).

**Ver. 1.** *Behold what manner of love*, &c.] See, take notice, consider, look by faith, with wonder and astonishment, and observe how great a favour, what an instance of matchless love, what a wonderful blessing of grace,

*the Father hath bestowed upon us*: the Father of Christ, and the Father of us in Christ, who hath adopted us into his family, and regenerated us by his grace, and hath freely given us the new name:

*that we should be called the sons of God*. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version, add, "and we are", or "be"; and the Ethiopic version, "and have been"; for it is not a mere name that is bestowed, but the thing itself in reality; and in the Hebrew language, "to be called", and "to be", are terms synonymous; (see <sup>Isaiah</sup> 9:6 <sup>Hosea</sup> 1:10); in what sense the saints are the sons of God; (see Gill on <sup>Galatians</sup> 4:6"); this blessing comes not by nature, nor by merit, but by grace, the grace of adoption; which is of persons unto an inheritance they have no legal right unto; the spring of it is the everlasting and unchangeable love of God, for there was no need on the adopter's side, he having an only begotten and beloved Son, and no worth and loveliness in the adopted, they being by nature children of wrath; it is a privilege that exceeds all others, and is attended with many; so that it is no wonder the apostle

breaks out in this pathetic manner, and calls upon the saints to view it with admiration and thankfulness:

*therefore the world knoweth us not*; that is, the greater part of the world, the world that lies in wickedness, the men of the world, who have their portion in this life, whom the god of this world has blinded, and who only mind the things of the world, and are as when they came into it, and have their conversation according to the course of it; these do not know the saints are the sons of God; the new name of sons is what no man knoweth but he that receiveth it; they do not own the saints as theirs, as belonging to them, but reckon them as the faith of the world, and the offscouring of all things; nor do they love them, and that because they are not their own, but hate them and persecute them: the reason is,

*because it knew him not*; neither the Father, whose sons they are, and who has bestowed the grace upon them; wherefore they know not, and disown and persecute his children; (see <sup>481725</sup>John 17:25 15:21 16:3); nor the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, the firstborn among many brethren; who, though he made the world, and was in it, was not known by it, but was hated, abused, and persecuted; and therefore it need not seem strange that the saints, who are the sons of God by adoption, should be treated in like manner.

**Ver. 2.** *Beloved, now are we the sons of God*, &c.] By adoption, secretly in God's predestination, and in the covenant of grace; and openly in regeneration, through faith in Christ, and by the testimony of the Spirit:

*and it doth not yet appear what we shall be*; though they are sons, they do not appear now as such, as they will do, when they shall be introduced into their Father's house, and into the many mansions there prepared for them; when Christ shall publicly own them as the children given unto him, and when they shall be put into the possession of the inheritance they are heirs of; besides, they will appear then not only to be kings' sons, but kings themselves, as they now are; they will then inherit the kingdom prepared for them, and will sit down on a throne of glory, and have a crown of righteousness, life, and glory, put upon them; and will appear not only perfectly justified, their sins being not to be found; and the sentence of justification afresh pronounced, and they placed out of the reach of all condemnation; but they will be perfectly holy and free from all sin, and perfectly knowing and glorious; they have a right to glory now, and glory is preparing for them, and they for that: and they are now representatively

glorified in Christ, but then they will be personally glorified: now, though all this shall certainly be, yet it does not now manifestly appear; it appears to God, who calls things that are not as though they were and to Christ, whose delights were with the sons men, these children of God, before the world was, and saw them in all the glory they were to be brought to; but not even to angels, until they are owned and confessed before them; much less to the world, who do not know what they are now, and still less what they will be, seeing them now in poverty, meanness, under many reproaches, afflictions, and persecutions; and even this does not appear to the saints themselves, whose life is a hidden life; and that by reason of darkness, desertion, and diffidence, for want of more knowledge, and from the nature of the happiness itself, which is at present unseen:

*but we know that when he shall appear*; that is, Jesus Christ, who is now in heaven, and out of sight, but will appear a second time: the time when is not known, but the thing itself is certain:

*we shall be like him*; in body, fashioned like to his glorious body, in immortality and incorruption, in power, in glory, and spirituality, in a freedom from all imperfections, sorrows, afflictions, and death; and in soul, which likeness will lie in perfect knowledge of divine things, and in complete holiness;

*for we shall see him as he is*; in his human nature, with the eyes of the body, and in his glorious person, with the eyes of the understanding; not by faith, as now, but by sight; not through ordinances, as in the present state, but through those beams of light and glory darting from him, with which the saints will be irradiated; and this sight, as it is now exceeding desirable, will be unspeakably glorious, delightful, and ravishing, soul satisfying, free from all darkness and error, and interruption; will assimilate and transform into his image and likeness, and be for ever. Philo the Jew observes<sup>f34</sup>, that Israel may be interpreted one that sees God; but adds, *οὐχ οἶος ἐστὶν ὁ ψεῶς*, “not what God is”, for this is impossible: it is indeed impossible to see him essentially as he is, or so as to comprehend his nature, being, and perfections; but then the saints in heaven will see God and Christ as they are, and as much as they are to be seen by creatures; God will be seen as he is in Christ; and Christ will be seen as he is in himself, both in his divine and human natures, as much as can be, or can be desired to be seen and known of him.

**Ver. 3.** *And every man that hath this hope in him, &c.*] Or on him, Jesus Christ; for a true hope of that eternal happiness, which lies in likeness to Christ, and in the vision of him, is only founded on his person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice: and this hope every man has not, only he who is born again; for this grace is implanted in regeneration, when men are of abundant mercy begotten unto it, and have it bestowed upon them as a free grace gift; and which is of great service to them both in life and in death; and among the rest it has this influence and effect upon them, that every such person that has it,

*purifieth himself even as he is pure*; not that any man can purify or cleanse himself from sin, this is only owing to the grace of God and blood of Christ; nor that any man can be so pure and holy as Christ is, who is free from all sin, both original and actual; but this must be understood either of a man that has faith and hope in Christ, dealing by these with the blood of Christ for purity and cleansing, with whom and which these graces are conversant for such purposes; or of such a person's imitating of Christ in the holiness of his life and conversation, making him his pattern and example, studying to walk as he walked; to which he is the more excited and stimulated by the hope he has of being a Son of God, a dear child of his, and therefore ought to be a follower of him, and walk as Christ walked, in humility; love, patience, and in other acts of holiness; and by the hope he has of being like unto him, and with him in the other world to all eternity: but then this "as" is only expressive of some degree of likeness and similitude, and not perfect equality, which is not to be expected in this, or in the world to come; believers indeed, who have faith and hope in the justifying righteousness of Christ, may, and should consider themselves pure and righteous, and free from sin, as Christ is; being clothed upon with his robe of righteousness, in which they stand without fault before the throne, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but this does not seem to be the sense of the place here, the argument being to engage the saints to purity and holiness of life and conversation, from the consideration of the great love of God bestowed upon them in their adoption, and from their hope of eternal happiness, as the context shows; (see ~~400~~ 2 Corinthians 7:1); other arguments follow.

**Ver. 4.** *Whosoever committeth sin, &c.*] This, in connection with what follows, is true of any sin, great or small, but here designs a course of sinning, a wilful, obstinate, persisting in sin:

*transgresseth also the law*; not of man, unless the law of men is founded on, and agrees with the law of God, for sometimes to transgress the laws of men is no sin, and to obey them would be criminal; but the law of God, and that not the ceremonial law, which was now abolished, and therefore to neglect it, or go contrary to it, was not sinful; but the moral law, and every precept of it, which regards love to God or to our neighbour, and which may be transgressed in thought, word, and deed; and he that committeth sin transgresses it in one or all of these ways, of which the law accuses and convicts, and for it pronounces guilty before God, and curses and condemns; and this therefore is an argument against sinning, because it is against the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, and contains the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God, which is agreeable to his nature and perfections; so that sin is ultimately against God himself:

*for sin is a transgression of the law*; and whatever is a transgression of the law is sin; the law requires a conformity of nature and actions to it, and where there is a want of either, it is a breach of it; it is concerned with the will and affections, the inclinations and desires of the mind, as well as the outward actions of life; concupiscence or lust is a violation of the law, as well as actual sin; and especially a course of sinning both in heart, lip, and life, is a continued transgression of it, and exposes to its curse and condemnation, and to the wrath of God; and is inconsistent with a true hope of being the sons and heirs of God: but then the transgression of what is not the law of God, whether the traditions of the elders among the Jews, or the ordinances of men among Papists, Pagans, and Turks, or any other, is no sin, nor should affect the consciences of men.

**Ver. 5.** *And ye know that he was manifested*, &c.] This is a truth of the Gospel the saints were well instructed in and acquainted with; that Jesus Christ, the Word and Son of God, who is here meant, who was with the Father, and lay in his bosom from all eternity, was in the fulness of time made manifest in the flesh, or human nature, by assuming it into union with his divine person; in which he came and dwelt among men, and became visible to them: the end of which manifestation was,

*to take away our sins*; as the antitype of the scape goat, making reconciliation and satisfaction for them, through the sacrifice of himself; which was doing what the blood of bulls and goats, or any legal sacrifices or moral performances, could never do: and this he did by taking the sins of his people upon himself, by carrying them up to the cross, and there

bearing them, with all the punishment due unto them, in his body; by removing them quite away, and utterly destroying them, finishing and making an end of them: and by causing them to pass away from them, from off their consciences, through the application of his blood by his Spirit:

*and in him is no sin*; neither original, nor actual; no sin inherent; there was sin imputed to him, but none in him, nor done by him; and hence he became a fit person to be a sacrifice for the sins of others, and by his unblemished sacrifice to take the away; and answered the typical sacrifices under the law, which were to be without spot and blemish: and this shows that he did not offer himself for any sins of his own, for there were none in him, but for the sins of others; and which consideration, therefore, is a strong dissuasive from sinning, and as such is mentioned by the apostle; for, since sin is of such a nature that nothing could atone for it but the blood and sacrifice of Christ, an innocent, as well as a divine person, it should be abhorred by us; and since Christ has taken it away by the sacrifice of himself, it should not be continued and encouraged by us; and since in him is no sin, we ought to imitate him in purity of life and conversation; the end of Christ's bearing our sins was, that we might live unto righteousness, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and his love herein should constrain us to obedience to him: so the Jews<sup>f35</sup> speak of a man after the image of God, and who is the mystery, of the name Jehovah; and in that man, they say, there is no sin, neither shall death rule over him; and this is that which is said, (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 5:4); neither shall evil dwell with thee.

**Ver. 6.** *Whosoever abideth in him*, &c.] As the branch in the vine, deriving all light, life, grace, holiness, wisdom, strength, joy, peace, and comfort from Christ; or dwells in him by faith, enjoys communion with him as a fruit of union to him; and stands fast in him, being rooted and grounded in him, and abides by him, his truths and ordinances, takes up his rest, and places his security in him, and perseveres through him:

*sinneth not*; not that he has no sin in him, or lives without sin, but he does not live in sin, nor give up himself to a vicious course of life; for this would be inconsistent with his dwelling in Christ, and enjoying communion with him:

*whosoever sinneth*; which is not to be understood of a single action, but of a course of sinning:

*hath not seen him, neither known him*; that is, he has never seen Christ with an eye of faith; he has never truly and spiritually seen the glory, beauty, fulness, and suitableness of Christ, his need, and the worth of him; he has never seen him so as to enjoy him, and have communion with him; for what communion hath Christ with Belial, or light with darkness, or righteousness with unrighteousness? (~~4064~~ 2 Corinthians 6:14,15), nor has he ever savingly known him, or been experimentally acquainted with him; for though he may profess to know him in words, he denies him in works.

**Ver. 7.** *Little children, let no man deceive you, &c.*] Neither by these doctrines, nor by wicked practices, drawing into the belief of the one, or into the performance of the other; suggesting, as the Gnostics did, that knowledge without practice was enough, and that it was no matter how a man lived, provided his notions of the Gospel were right:

*he that doeth righteousness, is righteous*; not that any man is made righteous by the works of the law, or by his obedience to the law of works, for this is contrary to the express word of God; and besides, the best righteousness of man is imperfect, and can never constitute or denominate him righteous before God; and was he justified by it; it would not only lay a foundation for boasting in him, which ought not to be, but would make the death, the sacrifice, and righteousness of Christ, to be in vain; men are only made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, which he has wrought out which is revealed in the Gospel, and received by faith, and which God imputes without works; so that he that doeth righteousness is he that being convinced of the insufficiency of his own righteousness, and of the excellency and suitableness of Christ's righteousness, renounces his own, and submits to his; who lays hold upon it, receives it, and exercises faith on it, as his justifying righteousness; and, in consequence of this, lives in a course of holiness and righteousness, in opposition to, and distinction from one that commits sin, or lives a sinful course of life; which, though it does not make him righteous in the sight of God, yet it shows him to be righteous in the sight of men, and proves that faith to be right which lays hold on the righteousness of Christ, by which he is truly righteous:

*even as he is righteous*; as Christ himself is righteous; and so the Syriac version reads; not as personal, or as he is personally and essentially righteous as God; but as mystical, every member of his body being clothed with the same robe of righteousness the whole body of Christ is, and indeed justified by the same righteousness that he as Mediator was, when

he rose from the dead, as the representative of his people: moreover, as Christ showed himself to be righteous as man, by doing good, so believers in him, by imitating him, and walking as he walked, show themselves to be good and righteous, like, though not equal to him; for as a tree is known by its fruits, so is a good man by his good works, and a righteous man by doing righteousness; and as good fruit does not make a good tree, but shows it to be good, so good works do not make a good man, nor a man's own righteousness make him a righteous man, but show him to be so.

**Ver. 8.** *He that committeth sin is of the devil, &c.*] Not everyone that sins, or commits acts of sin, then every man is of the devil, because no man lives without the commission of sin; but he who makes sin his constant business, and the employment of his life, whose life is a continued series of sinning, he is of the devil; not as to origin and substance, or by proper generation, as some have literally understood the words; but by imitation, being like him, and so of him their father, doing his lusts, living continually in sin, as he does, and so resemble him, as children do their parents; and hereby also appear to be under his government and influence, to be led captive by him at his will, and so to belong to him, and such as will have their part and portion with him in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, so living and dying:

*for the devil sinneth from the beginning*; not of his creation, for he was made by God a pure and holy creature; but from the beginning of the world, or near it, at least from the beginning of man's creation; for he not only sinned by rebelling against God himself, and by drawing in the rest of the apostate angels into the rebellion with him, but by tempting man, as soon as created, to sin against God: what was his first and particular sin is not certain, whether pride or envy, or what; seems to be, his not abiding in the truth, or an opposition to the truth of the Gospel, respecting the incarnation of the Son of God, mentioned in the following clause; (see ~~1~~ John 8:44); however, he has been continually sinning ever since: he “sinneth”; he is always sinning, doing nothing else but sin; so that he that lives a vicious course of life is like him, and manifestly of him:

*for this purpose the Son of God was manifested*; in human nature, as in (~~1~~ 1 John 3:5); whence it appears that he was the Son of God before his incarnation, and so not by it; he did not become so through it, nor was he denominated such on account of it; he was not made the Son of God by it, but was manifested in it what he was before; and for this end:

*that he might destroy the works of the devil*; and the devil himself, and all his dominion and power, and particularly his power over death, and death itself; and especially the sins of men, which are the works of the devil, which he puts them upon, influences them to do, and takes delight in; and which are destroyed by Christ, by his sacrifice and death, being taken, carried, removed away, finished, and made an end of by him; (see Gill on “~~1~~ John 3:5”).

**Ver. 9.** *Whosoever is born of God*, &c.] In a figurative and spiritual sense; who are regenerated, or born from above; who are quickened by the grace of God, and have Christ formed in them; who are made partakers of the divine nature, and new creatures in Christ; which spiritual birth is not owing to men, to the power and will of men, but to the grace of God; and is sometimes ascribed to the Father, who of his own will and abundant mercy begets souls again to a lively hope, and saves them by the washing of regeneration; and sometimes to Christ, who quickens whom he will, whose grace is implanted, and image stamped in it, and by whose resurrection from the dead men are begotten again; and chiefly, to the Spirit of God, who is the author of regeneration, and of the whole of sanctification: and such as are born of him are alive through him, the spirit of life entering into them, and live to God and upon Christ, and breathe after divine and spiritual things, and have their senses to discern them; they see, hear, feel, taste, and savour them; and desire the sincere milk of the word, for their nourishment and growth; and have every grace implanted in them, as faith, hope, and love: and of every such an one it is said, he

*doth not commit sin*; does not make it his trade and business; it is not the constant course of his life; he does not live and walk in sin, or give up himself to it; he is not without the being of it in him, or free from acts of sin in his life and conversation, but he does not so commit it as to be the servant of it, a slave unto it, or to continue in it; and that for this reason:

*for his seed remaineth in him*; not the word of God, or the Gospel, though that is a seed which is sown by the ministers of it, and blessed by God, and by which he regenerates his people; and which having a place in their hearts, becomes the ingrafted word, and there abides, nor can it be rooted out; where it powerfully teaches to avoid sin, is an antidote against it, and a preservative from it: nor the Holy Spirit of God, though he is the author of the new birth, and the principle of all grace; and where he once is, he always abides; and through the power of his grace believers prevail against

sin, and mortify the deeds of the body, and live: but rather the grace of the Spirit, the internal principle of grace in the soul, the new nature, or new man formed in the soul, is meant; which seminally contains all grace in it, and which, like seed, springs up and gradually increases, and always abides; and is pure and incorruptible, and neither sins itself, nor encourages sin, but opposes, checks, and prevents it:

*and he cannot sin*; not that it is impossible for such a man to do acts of sin, or that it is possible for him to live without sin; for the words are not to be understood in the sense of those who plead for perfection in this life; for though the saints have perfection in Christ, yet not in themselves; they are not impeccable, they are not free from sin, neither from the being nor actings of it; sin is in them, lives in them, dwells in them, hinders all the good, and does all the mischief it can: or in such sense, as if the sins of believers were not sins; for though they are pardoned and expiated, and they are justified from them, yet they do not cease to be sins; they are equally contrary to the nature, will, and law of God, as well as the sins of others; and are oftentimes attended with more aggravated circumstances, and which God in a fatherly way takes notice of, and chastises for, and on the account of which he hides his face from them: nor does the phrase intend any particular single sin, which cannot be committed; though there are such, as sinning wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, or denying Christ to be the Saviour of sinners, and a sacrifice for sin, and hatred of a Christian brother as such, and sinning the sin unto death, or the unpardonable sin; neither of which can be committed by a regenerate man: nor is the meaning only, though it is a sense that will very well bear, and agrees with the context, that such persons cannot sin as unregenerate men do; that is, live in a continued course of sinning, and with pleasure, and without reluctance, and so as to lie in it, as the whole world does: but rather the meaning is, he that is born of God, as he is born of God, or that which is born of God in him, the new man, or new creature, cannot sin; for that is pure and holy; there is nothing sinful in it, nor can anything that is sinful come out of it, or be done by it; it is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit of God; it is a good work, and well pleasing: in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold sin with delight; and an incorruptible seed, which neither corrupts nor is corrupted; and though it is as yet an imperfect work, it is not impure: the reason of the impeccability of the regenerate man, as such, is

*because he is born of God*: for that which is born of God in him, does, under the influence of the Spirit, power, and grace of God, preserve him from the temptations of Satan, the pollutions of the world, and the corruptions of his own heart; (see ~~GEN~~1 John 5:18); which the Vulgate Latin version there renders, “the generation of God”, meaning regeneration, or that which is born of God, “preserveth him”: this furnishes out a considerable argument for the perseverance of the saints.

**Ver. 10.** *In this the children of God are manifest*, &c.] By regenerating grace, and not sinning, in the sense before explained, in consequence of it: adoption is an act of God's grace and sovereign will; it is secret in his own heart, and is secured in divine predestination, and in the covenant of grace, and is antecedent to regeneration: regeneration and faith do not make men the children of God, but manifest them to be so; adoption makes them the children of God, and entitles them to the inheritance; regeneration gives them the nature of the children of God, and makes them meet for it, and manifests their right unto it; not to the men of the world, but to themselves and other saints:

*and the children of the devil*; such as imitate him, do his will and his lusts, and are openly under his power and influence; these are distinguishable from regenerate persons, and the children of God, by their lives and conversations; so the people of the nations of the world are called, *ywnb*, “the children of Samael”, and the serpent, by the Jews <sup>f36</sup>, which are with them the names of the devil.

*Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God*: that is, he does; not appear to be born of God, who does not by faith lay hold on the righteousness of Christ for his justification before God, and acceptance with him; and who does not do works of righteousness in faith from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God; for where regenerating grace is, there will be such graces and such practices:

*neither he that loveth not his brother*; for as he that loveth God, and Christ, and the brethren, appears manifestly to be born again, and to have passed from death to life, so he that does not is in darkness, in a state of unregeneracy, and walks and continues therein; for was he born again, he would be taught of God to love the saints; (see ~~GEN~~1 John 4:7 3:14 2:11).

**Ver. 11.** *For this is the message*, &c.] Sent from God by Christ, or what he in his ministry declared, and is the commandment which was so frequently urged by him, (<sup><B133></sup>John 13:34 15:12,17);

*that ye have heard from the beginning*; of the preaching of the Gospel to them, and of their conversion; (see <sup><B117></sup>1 John 2:7);

*that we should love one another*; to which the command of Christ, the reason with which it is enforced, and the early notice of it, should engage.

**Ver. 12.** *Not as Cain*, &c.] That is, let us not be like him, or do as he did, hate the brethren. The apostle illustrates brotherly love by its contrary, in the instance of Cain, who was the first instance and example of hatred of the brethren, and of fratricide, and a very detestable one, by which he would dissuade from so vile and abominable a practice:

*[who] was of that wicked one*; Satan, a child of his, an imitator of him, one that appeared to be under his influence, and to belong unto him. So the Jews say of Cain <sup>f37</sup>, that

“he was of the side of the serpent (the old serpent the devil); and as the way of the serpent is to slay and to kill, so Cain immediately became a murderer.”

And again,

“because Cain came from the side of the angel of death, he slew his brother <sup>f38</sup>,”

though they say that he afterwards repented, and became worthy of paradise <sup>f39</sup>.

*And slew his brother*; (see <sup><D1008></sup>Genesis 4:8). According to the tradition of the Jews <sup>f40</sup> he struck a stone into his forehead, and killed him:

*and wherefore slew he him?* what was the cause and occasion of it? what moved him to it?

*because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*; or “his work”, as the Ethiopic version reads: the sacrifice which he offered up, which, though it was not evil as to the matter and substance of it, yet was so, being offered with an evil mind, and with an hypocritical heart, and without faith in the sacrifice of Christ, and so was unacceptable to God; whereas, on the other hand, the sacrifice his brother brought was offered

up in the faith of Christ, by which he obtained a testimony that he was righteous, and that the work he did was a righteous work, being done in faith, and so was acceptable to God; which Cain perceiving, was filled with envy, and this put him upon killing him. The Jews <sup>f41</sup> relate the occasion of it after this manner;

“Cain said to Abel his brother, come, and let us go out into the open field; and when they were both out in the open field, Cain answered and said to Abel his brother, there is no judgment, nor Judge, nor another world; neither will a good reward be given to the righteous, nor vengeance be taken on the wicked; neither was the world created in mercy, nor is it governed in mercy; or why is thy offering kindly accepted, and mine is not kindly accepted? Abel answered and said to Cain, there is judgment, and there is a Judge, and there is another world; and there are gifts of a good reward to the righteous, and vengeance will be taken on the wicked; and the world was created in mercy, and in mercy it is governed, for according to the fruit of good works it is governed; because that my works are better than thine, my offering is kindly accepted, and thine is not kindly accepted; and they both strove together in the field, and Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”

In the Hebrew text in (~~0008~~Genesis 4:8); there is an extraordinary large pause, as if a discourse of this kind, which passeth between the two brothers, was to be inserted. Philo the Jew says <sup>f42</sup>, that in the contention or dispute between Cain and Abel, Abel attributed all things to God, and Cain ascribed everything to himself; so that the controversy was about grace and works, as now; and as then Cain hated his brother upon this account, so now carnal men hate and persecute the saints, because they will not allow their works to be the cause of justification and salvation: and from hence also it may be observed, that a work may be, as to the matter of it, good, and yet as to its circumstances, and the end and view of it, evil.

**Ver. 13.** *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*] By “the world” is meant the inhabitants of the world, the wicked part of them; these hate the saints, though without a cause, any just cause, and for no other reason, but because they are chosen and called out of the world, and do not live the wicked life they do: and this hatred of theirs is not at all to be wondered at; so it was from the beginning, and has been in all ages since; immediately upon the fall there was enmity between the seed of the woman

and the seed of the serpent, which showed itself in Cain, the instance just given, who hated and murdered his righteous brother; Ishmael, that was born after the flesh, persecuted Isaac, that was born after the Spirit; and as it was then, it is now, the Jews persecuted the prophets of old, and hated Christ and his apostles. This is the common lot of all the saints, of all that will live godly in Christ Jesus; and therefore it should not be reckoned a strange and unusual thing; it always was so, even from the beginning, as soon as ever there were two sorts of persons, good and bad, righteous and wicked. This is a corollary or conclusion drawn from the above instance of Cain.

**Ver. 14.** *We know that we have passed from death to life, &c.*] From a death in sin, a moral or spiritual death; which lies in a separation from God, Father, Son, and Spirit; in an alienation from the life of God; in a loss of the image of God, of righteousness, holiness, and knowledge, in which man was created; in a privation of all true sense of sin, and in a servitude to it, which is unto death, and is no other than death: and from a legal death, or death in a legal sense, under the sentence of which all men are, as considered in Adam; and which God's elect are sensible of, when convinced by the Spirit of God, and are in their own apprehension as dead men. Now in regeneration, which is a quickening of sinners dead in sin, a resurrection of them from the dead, the people of God pass from this death of sin, and the law, to a life of sanctification, having principles of grace and life implanted in them; and to a life of justification, and of faith on Christ, as the Lord their righteousness; and to a life of communion with Christ; and to such a life as is to the glory of Christ; and to a right to eternal life. And this passing from the one to the other is not of themselves, it is not their own act; no man can quicken himself, or raise himself from the dead; in this men are passive: and so the words are rendered in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, “we know that we are translated”; that is, by God the Father, who delivers from the power of darkness, and death, and translates into the kingdom of his dear Son, which is a state of light and life; or by Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, who is the author of the resurrection from the death of sin to a life of grace; or by the Spirit of life from Christ, by whom souls are quickened, and of whom they are born again: and this passage from death to life, or regeneration, is a thing that may be, and is known by the regenerate man; who, as he knows surely, that whereas he was blind he now sees, so that whereas he was dead in sin, he is now alive; and among other things it may be known by this,

*because we love the brethren:* this is not the cause of passing from death to life, but the effect of it, and so an evidence of it, or that by which it is known; brotherly love being what the saints are taught of God in regeneration, and is a fruit of the Spirit of God, and is what true faith works by, and is what shows itself as soon as anything in a regenerate man; nor can anyone love the saints, as such, as brethren in Christ, unless he is born again; a man may indeed love a saint, as a natural relative, as a good neighbour, and because he has done him some good offices, and because of some excellent qualities in him, as a man of learning, sense, candour, civility, &c. though he has not the grace of God; but to love him as a child of God, a member of Christ, and because he has his image stamped on him, no man can do this, unless he has received the grace of God; so that this is a certain evidence of it:

*he that loveth not [his] brother, abideth in death;* in the death of sin, in a state of nature and unregeneracy; under the sentence of condemnation and death; and he is liable to eternal death, which is the wages of sin, under the power of which such a manifestly is. This is said to deter from hatred, as also what follows.

**Ver. 15.** *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, &c.]* A soul murderer, as the Ethiopic version renders it; not only of himself, for every sinner, by sinning, wrongs and destroys his own soul; but of his brother whom he hates: he is a murderer of him in his heart, even as he that lusts after a woman hath committed adultery with her in his heart, out of which arise murders, as well as adulteries; it is not only taking away life, but also causeless anger, malice, and hatred, that is a breach of the sixth command; (see <sup>412</sup>Matthew 5:21,22,28 15:19);

*and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him;* he has not the grace of life, or the beginning of eternal life in him; he has no meetness for it, being unregenerate; and no right unto it, being unrighteous; nor has he the earnest and pledge of it, being destitute of the Spirit of God; all which a regenerate man has, and has them abiding in him: not but that the sin of murder may be forgiven; a man guilty of it may truly repent, and have pardoning grace applied unto him, and enjoy eternal life, through the grace of the Spirit, and the blood and righteousness of Christ; but without these he is so far from having eternal life, that he is not only punishable with a corporeal death, according to the laws of God and man; but he is exposed unto, and will die the second, or an eternal death.

**Ver. 16.** *Hereby perceive we the love [of God], &c.*] The phrase “of God” is not in the Oriental versions, nor in the Greek copies, but is in the Complutensian edition, and in the Vulgate Latin version, and is favoured by the Syriac version, which reads, “by this we know his love to us”; and so the Ethiopic version, “by this we know his love”. That is, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is truly and properly God, the great God, the mighty God, the true God, and God over all, blessed for ever. His love is manifested to his people, and perceived by them in various instances; but in nothing is it more clearly seen than in the following one:

*because he laid down his life for us:* of the life of Christ, and his laying it down in the room of his people, (see Gill on “<sup><48153></sup>John 15:13”), which shows his love, his free grace and favour; for this arose not from any merit or worth in the persons he died for; not from their love, loveliness, or duty, but from his rich mercy, and the great love wherewith he loved them; and which, though it cannot be equalled, should be imitated:

*and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren:* not in such sense, or for such ends and purposes, as Christ laid down his life for us; for no man, as by giving his money, so by laying down his life, can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him: but the meaning is, that saints ought to risk their lives, and expose themselves to dangers, for the sake of their brethren, when they are called to it, and the case requires it: as Priscilla and Aquila laid down their necks, or ventured their lives for the Apostle Paul, ( <sup><51618></sup>Romans 16:3,4); and they should also, when called unto it, freely lay down their lives in the cause of Christ, and for the sake of his Gospel, for the gaining of souls to Christ, and for the confirming of the faith of the brethren in him, as the apostles of Christ, and the martyrs of Jesus, have done; this is an argument for brotherly love, in the highest instance of it, taken from the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, than which nothing is more forcible, or can lay a greater obligation on the saints.

**Ver. 17.** *But whoso hath this world's good, &c.*] The possessions of this world, worldly substance, the temporal good things of it; for there are some things in it, which are honestly, pleasantly, and profitably good, when used lawfully, and not abused, otherwise they are to the owner's hurt: or “the living of this world”; that which the men of the world give up themselves to, are bent upon, and pursue after; or on which men live, and by which life is maintained, and preserved, and made comfortable in the present state of things; such as meat, drink, apparel, money, houses, lands,

&c. The Ethiopic version renders it, “he that hath the government of this world”; as if it pointed at a person that is in some high office of worldly honour and profit, and is both great and rich; but the words are not to be restrained to such an one only, but refer to any man that has any share of the outward enjoyments of life; that has not only a competency for himself and family, but something to spare, and especially that has an affluence of worldly substance; but of him that has not, it is not required; for what a man distributes ought to be his own, and not another’s, and in proportion to what he has, or according to his ability:

*and seeth his brother have need*; meaning, not merely a brother in that strict and natural relation, or bond of consanguinity; though such an one in distress ought to be, in the first place, regarded, for no man should hide himself from, overlook and neglect his own flesh and blood; but any, and every man, “his neighbour”, as the Ethiopic version reads, whom he ought to love as himself; and especially a brother in a spiritual relation, or one that is of the household of faith: if he has need; that is, is naked and destitute of daily food, has not the common supplies of life, and what nature requires; and also, whose circumstances are low and mean, though not reduced to the utmost extremity; and if he sees him in this distress with his own eyes, or if he knows it, hears of it, and is made acquainted with it, otherwise he cannot be blameworthy for not relieving him.

*And shutteth up his bowels [of compassion] from him*; hardens his heart, turns away his eyes, and shuts his hand; has no tenderness in him for, nor sympathy with his distressed brother, nor gives him any succour: and this shows, that when relief is given, it should be not in a morose and churlish manner, with reflection and reproach, but with affection and pity; and where there is neither one nor the other,

*how dwelleth the love of God in him?* neither the love with which God loves men; for if this was shed abroad in him, and had a place, and dwelt in him, and he was properly affected with it, it would warm his heart, and loosen his affections, and cause his bowels to move to his poor brother: nor the love with which God is loved; for if he does not love his brother whom he sees in distress, how should he love the invisible God? (~~and~~ 1 John 4:20); nor that love which God requires of him, which is to love his neighbour as himself.

**Ver. 18.** *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, &c.]* Which though it holds good of love to God, and to Jesus Christ, yet here is

to be understood of love to the brethren, as the context shows; and so the Syriac version reads, “let us not love one another in word”, &c. that is, without the heart, or with a double heart; speaking one thing with the lip, and designing another thing in the heart; speaking peaceably with the mouth, and with the heart laying wait; or we should not love in this manner “only”; and so the Arabic version of Deuteronomy Dieu adds. It is very lawful, and right to express our love to one another, and to all men in words, to give good words, and use courteous language, and speak in a kind, tender, and affectionate manner, and especially to persons in distress; but this should not be all, it will be of no avail to say to such, be warmed and filled, and give them nothing but these good words, nothing to warm and fill them with; (see <sup><sup>SUTIS></sup>James 2:15,16);

*but in deed and in truth*; for true love is a laborious and operative grace, hence we read of the work and labour of love; it shows itself by the saints serving one another, in spirituals; as by bearing one another's burdens, forbearing with, and forgiving one another, praying for each other, and building up one another on their most holy faith; exhorting each other to the duties of religion, and not suffering sins upon one another, but admonish in love, and restore with meekness; and in temporals, distributing to the necessities of the saints, ministering: to them of their worldly substance, and supplying their daily wants: and this is loving “in deed”, or “in work”; this is actual love, love in fact, and what is apparent and evident: and it is “in truth”, when it is in reality, and not in show only; and when it is cordially and heartily done, with cheerfulness, and without grudging.

**Ver. 19.** *And hereby we know that we are of the truth*, &c.] By the saints loving one another in deed and in truth, they know, as the cause is known by the effect, that they are of God, who is the true God, the God of truth, and cannot lie, and is truth itself; that they are the children of God, and are born of him, since they love those that are, and every like loves its like; and that they are of Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life; that they belong to him, are his, since they have his Spirit, as appears by his fruits in them, and this, among the rest, love to the brethren; and that they are his disciples, which others, even all men know, as well as themselves, by their mutual brotherly love; and that they are of the Gospel, which is truth, and the word of truth; that they are begotten, and born again, according to the will and grace of God by it, and are on the side of it, and can do nothing against, but all for it; and that they are true, sincere, and

upright persons, true believers in Christ, whose faith works by love, and are real lovers of him, and his, since they love not in word only, but in deed and in truth.

*And shall assure our hearts before him*; or “persuade our hearts”: arrive to a full assurance of faith, hope, and understanding, that we are of the truth, do belong to God, are loved by him with an everlasting love, are chosen by him unto salvation, and are his adopted and regenerated ones, having passed from death to life, of which brotherly love is a sure evidence, (1 John 3:14). Some render the words “shall pacify”, or “make our hearts tranquil”: or “quiet”; this only the blood of Christ can do, and does, being sprinkled on the conscience: he only has a quiet mind, or true peace of conscience, that looks to the righteousness of Christ for justification, and deals with his blood for the full and free remission of his sins: it is true indeed, that one that loves his brother heartily and sincerely, has peace of mind in it, though not for it; when, on the other hand, there is no peace to the wicked man, that hates his brother; for where there is envying, malice, hatred, and strife, there is no true peace, pleasure, and comfort, but confusion, uneasiness, distraction, and every evil work. Or this passage may refer to that holy confidence before God, which true believers in Christ, and cordial lovers of the brethren, have; both now at the throne of grace, where they can come with boldness, intrepidity, and freedom, to ask for what they want, and confidently believe they shall receive what is proper and needful for them; and also hereafter, at the throne of judgment, and in the day of judgment, when they shall have boldness, and not be ashamed before the Judge at his coming; who will particularly take notice of their love in feeding, clothing, and visiting the least of his brethren, which he takes as done to himself.

**Ver. 20.** *For if our heart condemn us*, &c.] Of want of love to the brethren, and of hypocrisy in it, as well as of any other sin; for the conscience, which is meant by the heart here, is accuser, witness and judge; it accuses of the evil of sin, and is as good as a thousand witnesses; and upon its own testimony pronounces guilty, and condemns.

*God is greater than our heart*: for he is the Maker of it, and he has the power over it, and the management of it; it is in his hands, and to be turned by him as he pleases; and he is the searcher and trier of it; and besides, is a swifter witness than conscience, and a superior Judge unto it.

*And knoweth all things*; that are in the heart; the principles of actions, and all the actions of men, for which their hearts condemn them; and all the sinfulness in them, and the aggravations of them; wherefore, as he knows them more perfectly, he judges of them more exactly, and will reprove more sharply, and condemn more severely for them: hence, if the condemnation of men's hearts and consciences be so very great, as sometimes to be intolerable and insupportable, what will be the righteous judgment, and dreadful condemnation of God? how fearful a thing will it be to fall into the hands of the living God! this sense is confirmed by the Syriac version rendering it, "how much greater is God than our hearts?" there is another sense given by some, which is not by way of terror, but comfort, and that is, that if the hearts of believers accuse, reprove, and condemn for sin through unbelief, or want of clear view of pardon and righteousness by Christ, God is greater, as in power, so in knowledge, than the hearts of men; and he knows the thoughts he has towards them, which are of peace, and not of evil; the covenant he has made with his Son, of which he is ever mindful; and what his Son has done, that he has made full satisfaction for sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness: so that let sin, or Satan, or the world, or the law, or their own hearts condemn them, there is no condemnation of any avail unto them. But the former sense seems best to agree with the context.

**Ver. 21.** *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not*, &c.] Which must be understood, not of a stupidity of mind, as is in unregenerate men, who have no sense of sin, no sorrow for it, or remorse of conscience on account of it; or as is in them who are past feeling; having their consciences seared as with a red hot iron; such cannot be entitled to the advantages that follow; nor is it of persons the apostle speaks, but of himself, and Christians, the beloved of the Lord, and one another, who had an experience of the grace of God upon their souls, and made a profession of religion: nor does it design such a purity of heart and life in believers, as that their hearts do not smite, reproach, and condemn them for sin at any time, for such a state of perfection is not to be attained to and expected in this life; but rather a conscience purged by the blood of Christ, or an heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by that blood, which speaks peace and pardon, so that there is no more conscience of sin, for the removal of which that is applied; and this gives boldness and confidence at the throne of grace: though it is best of all to confine it to the case of brotherly love; for the sense is not, if our

heart condemn us not of anything but of the want of brotherly love, or insincerity in it,

*[then] have we confidence towards God*; or with him, at the throne of his grace: such can draw nigh to him, and stand before him with an holy and humble confidence, when such as hate the brethren, as Cain did, in whom the apostle instances, and those that go in his way, cannot; whose heart condemned him, his conscience smote him, and he went from the presence of the Lord; but those that love the brethren have confidence of their relation to God; by this they know their regeneration, and by that their adoption, and so that they are the children of God; and can therefore draw nigh to God as their Father, and call him so; they can come with an holy boldness and intrepidity of mind before him, and use a *παρρησια*, “freedom of speech”, with him; can tell him all their mind, pour out their souls unto him, and lay before him their case and wants; they have confidence of his power, faithfulness, and willingness to supply their need, and fulfil all his promises to them, and that their prayers will be heard, answered, and regarded by him in his own time.

**Ver. 22.** *And whatsoever we ask we receive of him*, &c.] According to his promise, (<sup><107></sup>Matthew 7:7); that is, whatever is asked according to the will of God, in the name of Christ, and for his sake, and in faith, nothing wavering, but believing in God, in his covenant and promises, for these are provisos in the case; and such as ask in this way may exercise an holy confidence that they shall receive; and indeed they do receive what they ask for; (see <sup><114></sup>1 John 5:14 <sup><113></sup>John 14:13,14 <sup><112></sup>Matthew 21:22);

*because we keep his commandments*; not that keeping the commands of God is the meritorious cause of receiving anything from him; for when men have done all they can, or are assisted to do, they are but unprofitable servants in point of merit: whatever is received from God, as it is in consequence of asking, so it is entirely owing to his own grace and favour, and for the sake of Christ; but keeping the commands of God is a necessary adjunct, or, as Calvin on the text calls it, an inseparable accident, or what necessarily belongs unto, and enters into the character of such, who are heard and answered by God, and receive at his hands; for there is a great deal of truth in what the Jews say to the blind man, (<sup><111></sup>John 9:31); and which may serve as a comment on these words:

*and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*; as keeping of his commandments is; not that these things ingratiate into the love and favour

of God, or are the causes and conditions of it, for the love of God is prior to anything of this kind; nor are they the causes of men's acceptance with God, for the acceptance both of persons and services is only in Christ the beloved; but these things are what God approves of, when done in faith, from a principle of love, and with a view to his glory: and since he hears such persons that are worshippers of him, and do his will, and has promised good things to them; this is therefore a reason strengthening their confidence in him, that what they ask they shall receive.

**Ver. 23.** *And this is his commandment*, &c.] Having mentioned the keeping of the commandments of God, the apostle proceeds to show what they are; that they are faith in Christ, and love to one another; which two are reduced to one, because they are inseparable; where the one is, the other is; faith works by love.

*That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*; Christ is the object of faith, and he is no, as he is Jesus, a Saviour; faith deals with him as such, and will have no other Saviour but he: and now to believe in him, is not merely to believe that he is the Son of God, the true Messiah, the Saviour of the world, that he is come in the flesh, has suffered, and died, and rose again from the dead, is ascended into heaven, and is set down at the right hand of God, makes intercession for his people, and will come again to judge the quick and dead; but it is to go forth in special and spiritual acts upon him, such as looking at him, coming to him, venturing on him, trusting in him for life and salvation, committing all into his hands, and expecting all from him. And this is called a "commandment", and comes under the notion of one; not that it is properly a law, or belongs to the law; for faith in Christ Jesus is a fruit of electing grace, and a blessing of the covenant of grace; it is the free gift of God, and the operation of his Spirit, and is peculiar to the elect of God, and sheep of Christ; and so cannot belong to the law of works; but, as the Hebrew words, **hrwt**, and **hwxm**, both signify any doctrine, and instruction in general; (see <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 19:7,8); so the word here used designs an evangelical doctrine, a divine instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, which declares that he that believes in Christ shall be saved; and so the word is used for a doctrine in this epistle, (<sup><BIB></sup>1 John 2:7); and that of the next command or doctrine, which follows,

*and love one another as he gave us commandment*; that is, as Christ taught and instructed his disciples, (<sup><BIB></sup>John 13:34 15:17).

**Ver. 24.** *And he that keepeth his commandments, &c.*] Attends to those instructions and declarations concerning faith in Christ, and love to the brethren, and acts according to them:

*dwelleth in him, and he in them*; that is, he dwells in Christ, and Christ dwells in him; the same is said of believing in Christ under the figurative expressions of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, (see Gill on “~~John~~ John 6:56”);

*and hereby we know that he abideth in us*; or dwelleth in us, as before,

*by the Spirit which he hath given us*; which if understood of private Christians, as the preceding verses incline to, the sense is, that union to Christ, and the continuance of it, or his indwelling as a fruit of union, and the permanency of that, are evidenced by the Spirit of God; who is given in consequence of union and relation to Christ, as a spirit of regeneration and sanctification, of faith and love, of adoption, and as the earnest of the heavenly inheritance; but if of the apostles and ministers of the word, it may regard the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed on them, fitting them for their work and office, and who is a spirit of truth, and not of error; and by having and enjoying these, they knew that Christ abode in them, and had reason to believe, according to his promise, that he would be with them, and with his ministering: servants in succession, to the end of the world; and this sense seems to be encouraged by the former part of the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 4

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN 4

In this chapter the apostle cautions against seducing spirits; advises to try them, and gives rules by which they may be known, and by which they are distinguished from others; and then returns to his favourite subject, brotherly love. He exhorts the saints not to believe every man that came with a doctrine to them, but to try them, since there were many false teachers in the world; and gives a rule by which they may be tried and judged, as that whatever teacher owns Christ to be come in the flesh is of God, but he that does not is not of God, but is the spirit of antichrist that should come, and was in the world, (~~1~~ John 4:1,2), but, for the comfort of those to whom he writes, he observes, that they were of God, and had overcome these false teachers, through the mighty power of the divine Spirit in them, who is greater than Satan, and all his emissaries, (~~1~~ John 4:4). He distinguishes between seducing spirits, and faithful ministers of the word; the former are of the world, speak of worldly things, and worldly men hear them; but the latter are of God, and they that have any spiritual knowledge of God hear them; but such as are not of God do not hear them, by which may he know the spirit of truth from the spirit of error, (~~1~~ John 4:5,6). And then the apostle returns to his former exhortation to brotherly love, which he enforces by the following reasons, because it is of God, a fruit of his Spirit and grace, and because it is an evidence of being born of God, and of having a true knowledge of him; whereas he that is destitute of it does not know him, seeing God is love, (~~1~~ John 4:7,8), and having affirmed that God is love, he proves it, by the mission of his Son, to be a propitiation for the sins of such that did not love him, and that they might live through him; wherefore he argues, that if God had such a love to men, so undeserving of it, then the saints ought to love one another, (~~1~~ John 4:9-11). Other arguments follow, engaging to it, as that God is invisible; and if he is to be loved, then certainly his people, who are visible; and that such who love one another, God dwells in them, and his love is perfected in them; and that he dwells in them is known by the gift of his Spirit to them, (~~1~~ John 4:12,13), and that God the Father so loved the world, as to send his Son to be the Saviour of it, before asserted,

is confirmed by the apostles, who were eyewitnesses of it; who also declare, that whoever confesses the sonship of Christ, God dwells in him, and he in God; and who had an assurance of the love of God to them, who is love itself; so that he that dwells in God, and God in him, dwells in love, (<sup>(~~αἰ~~1)</sup>1 John 4:14-16). And great are the advantages arising from hence, for hereby the saints' love to God is made perfect; they have boldness in the day of judgment, since as he is, so are they in this world, and fear is cast out by it, (<sup>(~~αἰ~~7)</sup>1 John 4:17,18), but lest too much should be thought to be ascribed to love, that is said to be owing to the love of God to them, which is prior to theirs to him, and the reason of it, (<sup>(~~αἰ~~9)</sup>1 John 4:19). And the chapter is closed with observing the contradiction there is between a profession of love to God, and hatred of the brethren, seeing God, who is invisible, cannot be loved, if brethren that are seen are hated; and also the commandment, that he that loves God should love his brother also, (<sup>(~~αἰ~~1)</sup>1 John 4:20,21).

**Ver. 1.** *Beloved, believe not every spirit,* &c.] The apostle having mentioned the word “spirit” in the latter part of the preceding chapter, takes an occasion from thence to return to what he had been suggesting in the “second” chapter, concerning the many antichrists that then were, and whom he points out, and here cautions against. By “every spirit” he means, either every doctrine that is pretended to come from the Spirit of God, or every teacher, who professes to be qualified and sent by him, and to have his light, knowledge, and doctrine from him. Every true minister of the Gospel has the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit, more or less, to qualify him for his work; he is separated, and called to it by him, and receives his spiritual light and knowledge from him; it is he that teaches him sound doctrine, and leads him into all truth, as it is in Jesus, and brings every necessary truth to his remembrance; and who succeeds his ministrations to the good of souls: but there are some who call themselves the ministers of the Gospel, who, though they may have some natural abilities, and a share of human learning, and a notional knowledge of things, yet have never received either grace or gifts from the Spirit; nor have they been ever called by him; nor are their ministrations according to that divine word which is inspired by him, nor attended with his demonstration and power; wherefore, though some professing to have the Spirit of Christ are to be believed, yet not everyone; and though the Spirit is not to be quenched in any, nor prophesying to be despised, yet care should be taken what is heard and received: some persons are so obstinate and incredulous as not to

believe anything that is declared, be the evidence what it will; as the Jews would not believe Christ and his apostles, though what they said agreed with Moses and the prophets, and was confirmed by miracles; and others are too credulous; at once receive every teacher, and embrace every upstart doctrine: this they should not do,

*but try the spirits whether they are of God;* not by human reason, especially as carnal and unsanctified; for though the doctrines of the Gospel are not contrary to true reason, they are above it, and not to be judged of by it, and are disapproved of and rejected by carnal reason; but by the word of God, which is the standard of all doctrine; and whatever agrees with that is to be received, and what does not should be rejected. And so to do is very commendable, as appears from the instance of the Bereans, who on this account are said to be more noble than those of Thessalonica, (<sup><4471></sup>Acts 17:11); and from the commendation of the church at Ephesus, (<sup><4480></sup>Revelation 2:2). And this is what every believer, every private Christian should do; to them it belongs to read and search the Scriptures, and prove all things, and judge for themselves of the truth of doctrine; and to such a probation or trial of the spirits, spiritual light, knowledge, judgment, sense, experience, and divine guidance are necessary, which should be asked of God, and an increase thereof; and all such diligent searchers, and humble inquirers, are capable of making judgment of persons and doctrines, whether they are from the Spirit of God or not, for the Spirit of God never speaks contrary to his word: and the reason why such a trial should be made is,

*because many false prophets are gone out into the world:* such who pretended either to a revelation of future things, and to foretell things to come; or rather to a gift of prophesying, or preaching in Christ's name, to be "prophets" and spiritual men, and ministers of the word, but were "false" ones; who either predicted what did not come to pass, or rather preached false doctrine, by corrupting the word, and handling it deceitfully, and so imposed upon and ruined the souls of others, as well as deceived their own: and there were not only one, or two, or a few of these, but "many", as our Lord had foretold, (<sup><4481></sup>Matthew 24:11,24); and which makes the reason the stronger for not believing every spirit, but trying them; and the rather, since they were not sent of God, but called out by his churches, but were "gone out" of themselves; of their own heads, and without any mission from God or man: and "into the world" too; they were in every part of it, and especially where there were any churches of Christ;

into which they first crept in privily, and at unawares, but afterwards became public preachers of the word, and then separating from them, set up openly in the world for themselves.

**Ver. 2.** *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God, &c.*] This is a rule by which believers may know whether a man professing to have the Spirit of God, and to be called and sent by him, and whether the doctrine he preaches, is of him or not:

*every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God;* or of the Spirit of God; that is, every doctrine which carries this truth in it; or every man that owns, and professes, and publishes this doctrine concerning Christ, is on the side of God and truth; and which contains several articles in it, respecting the person and office of Christ; as that he existed before he came in the flesh, not in the human nature, or as man, or as an angel, but as the Son of God, as a divine person, being truly and properly God; so that this confession takes in his divine sonship, and proper deity, and also his true and real humanity; that the Messiah was incarnate, against the Jews, and was God and man in one person; and that he was really man, and not in appearance only, against the heretics of those times: and it also includes his offices, as that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Messiah, which the Jews denied, and that he was the anointed prophet, priest, and King; and so is a confession or acknowledgment of all the doctrines of the Gospel, which came by him, as a prophet; and of his satisfaction, sacrifice, and intercession, as a priest; and of all his ordinances and commands as a King; and that he is the only Saviour and Redeemer of men. Now, whoever owns and declares this system of truth, “is of God”; not that everyone that assents unto this, or preaches it, is born of God; a man may believe, and confess all this, as the devils themselves do, and yet be destitute of the grace of God; but the spirit, or doctrine, which contains these things in it, is certainly of God, or comes from him; or whoever brings these truths with him, and preaches them, he is, so far as he does so, on the side of God and truth, and to be regarded.

**Ver. 3.** *And every spirit that confesseth not, &c.*] The proper deity and sonship of Christ, his true and real humanity, and his Messiahship; or any of his offices, doctrines, and ordinances; or his satisfaction and righteousness; or that peace, pardon, justification, life, and salvation, are by him; all which are meant by what follows,

*that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*: this clause is left out in the Ethiopic version, and that without hurting the sense, since it is easily supplied from the preceding verse; and the Alexandrian copy, and the Vulgate Latin version, only read “Jesus”: and the latter reads the whole thus, “and every spirit that dissolves Jesus”; that separates the two natures, human and divine, in him, and makes two persons of them; or denies either of them, either that he is truly God, or really man, or denies him to be Jesus, the Saviour; who, as much as in him lies, destroys his person, office, and work, and makes void his obedience, sufferings, and death:

*is not of God*; neither he nor his doctrine are of God; his doctrine cannot come from God, being contrary to the word of God; and he himself is neither born of God, nor on his side.

*And this is that [spirit] of antichrist*: who is against Christ, or opposes himself to him; as he who denies his sonship, his deity, his humanity, his offices, and his grace, manifestly does; every doctrine that is calculated against these truths is the spirit and doctrine of antichrist:

*whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it the world*; in the false teachers, the forerunners of antichrist; (see Gill on “~~GEN~~1 John 2:18”).

**Ver. 4.** *Ye are of God, little children, &c.*] This, with what follows, is said for the comfort of the saints, and to deliver them from the fears of being drawn aside by the delusions of the false prophets, and antichrists; since they belonged to God, were his elect, and therefore could not be finally and totally seduced; they were the children of God by adopting grace, and could not become the servants of men; they were born of God, and so were kept by the power of God unto salvation, as all that are begotten unto a lively hope are; they were enlightened by the Spirit of God, and had a discerning of truth from error, and therefore could not be imposed upon:

*and have overcome them*; the false prophets, being in a good cause, fighting the good fight of faith, and having good weapons, particularly the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and invincible arguments from thence; and also gracious assistance from the Spirit of God, who gives a mouth that none can shut, and wisdom that none can resist; as well as an inward experience of the truth, and power of Gospel doctrines: a testimony within themselves, which will stand the whole shock and opposition of the enemy: the Vulgate Latin version reads, “and have

overcome him”; antichrist, whose spirit was then in the world; or the world itself, or Satan, the god of the world; and so the Ethiopic version reads, “and have overcome the evil one”, as in (<sup><4123></sup>1 John 2:13,14); the reason of which victory, and which adds to the comfort and support of saints in their present warfare, is,

*because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*; by “he that is in the world” is meant either the devil, the prince and god of the world, and who goes up and down in it, dwells in the hearts of the men of it, under whose influence they are, and in whom he works effectually; or antichrist, whose spirit was now in the world, and whose doctrine was propagated by the false teachers, in whom he began to appear; but he that is in the saints, either God who dwells in them, and their in him, (<sup><4115></sup>1 John 4:15); is mightier than the man of sin, and his emissaries, to keep and preserve from all corruptions, and every false way; or Christ, who dwells in their hearts by faith, and is stronger than the strong man armed, and able to save and deliver out of his hands; or the Spirit of God; and so the Arabic version reads, “the Spirit that is in you”; who is in the saints, as a spirit of regeneration and sanctification, as a spirit of adoption, and the earnest of their inheritance; he is able to carry on the work of grace in them, and finish it, and will do it; and he, as a spirit of truth, is more powerful than the spirit of error; and when the enemy comes in like a flood, or pours in a flood of errors and heresies, he lifts up a standard against him, causes him to fly, and secures the saints from being carried away with it: compare with this the Septuagint version of (<sup><3941></sup>Psalms 124:1,2), “if it had not been the Lord who was on our side”; which render it thus, “if the Lord had not been in us”.

**Ver. 5.** *They are of the world*, &c.] That is, the false prophets and teachers that were gone into the world, and had the spirit of antichrist in them; these were as they were when they came into the world, under the pollution, guilt, and dominion of sin, in a state of unregeneracy, carnality, and darkness; they properly belonged unto it, and walked after the course of it, and were under the influence of the god of it, who led them into error; and were sensual, and indulged themselves in worldly lusts, and were seeking after worldly things; supposed that gain was godliness, and had men's persons in admiration because of advantage; their nature and disposition, their principles and practices, and their ends and views, were worldly; and were quite different from Christ and his apostles, (<sup><4374></sup>John 17:14,16),

*therefore speak they of the world*; they speak the wisdom of the world, or that in which the world thinks wisdom lies, and cry up for true knowledge, and right principles; and this they do with the enticing words of man's wisdom, or in words which man's wisdom teacheth; speaking great swelling words of vanity, which take with vain and carnal minds; and preach doctrines suited to their own taste, and the taste of others, as carnal and worldly men; such as the purity of human nature, in its first conception and birth, its freedom from any original corruption, and from any concern with the sin of Adam, only with actual sin of its own; and the power of it to do that which is good, keep the law of God, and obtain his favour; the non-necessity of any internal work of efficacious grace, a reformation of life and manners being thought sufficient to render a man acceptable to God, and prepare him for eternal happiness; the doctrine of justification and salvation by works; all which are pleasing to carnal men: hence it follows,

*and the world heareth them*; the wicked of the world; worldly and unregenerate men attend on their ministry, approve of what they deliver, and receive it with pleasure, and believe it: this expresses both the quality of the hearers of false teachers, that they are that part of the world, the worse part of it, which lies in wickedness; and the quantity of them, the greater part of the world, as it was foretold by Christ, and his apostles, that they should deceive many, that many should follow their pernicious ways, and that they should draw many disciples after them; wherefore the numbers that attend such persons, as it need not be wondered at, since both preachers and hearers, and the doctrines preached and heard, are all alike, they are of the world, so it should not be stumbling to the people of God.

**Ver. 6.** *We are of God*, &c.] Not only as the chosen of God, the children of God, regenerated ones, and believers, but as ministers of the Gospel; they were chosen, and called, and sent of God to preach the Gospel, and were qualified for it, by gifts received from him, and had their doctrine from him, as well as their commission and mission: they were not of the world, and therefore did not speak of the world, nor things suited to worldly men; but being of God, they spoke the words of God, which were agreeable to him, which made for the glory of the three divine Persons, and were consistent with the divine perfections; which maintained the honour and dignity of the persons in the Godhead; which magnified the grace of God in salvation, and debased the creature:

*he that knoweth God*; not only as the God of nature and providence, but as in Christ, and that not only professionally, but practically; that has an experimental knowledge of him, that knows him as exercising lovingkindness, having tasted of his grace and goodness; that knows him so as to trust in him, and love him; for such a knowledge of God is meant, as has true real affection to him joined with it; so that it is he that loves his name, his glory, his truths, and his ordinances: he

*heareth us*: not only externally, constantly attending on the ministry of the word, as such do; but internally, understanding what is heard, receiving it in love, cordially embracing it, and firmly believing it, and acting according to it:

*he that is not of God*; who is not born of God, but is as he was when born into the world, and is of it: and who does not righteousness, nor loves his brother, nor confesses the divinity, humanity, and offices of Christ, and so is not on the side of truth, nor has the truth of grace in him; (see ~~1~~ 1 John 3:10 4:3); such a man

*heareth not us*; he is a mere natural man, a carnal and unregenerate man; and such an one cannot attend on a Gospel ministry, or receive Gospel doctrines, which are with him senseless, stupid, and foolish notions, yea, foolishness itself; nor can he know and understand them through ignorance, and want, of a spiritual discerning; they are hard sayings, and he cannot hear, nor bear them; and when this is the case, it is a plain token of unregeneracy, and that such persons are not of God; (see ~~8~~ John 8:47).

*Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*; the difference between truth and error; can distinguish one from another, and discern who are the true ministers of Christ, and who are the false teachers; for not only the word of God, the Scriptures of truth, are the test and standard, the touchstone to bring them to, and try them by; and the doctrines they severally bring show who they are; but even their very hearers distinguish them. Spirits, or men pretending to the Spirit of God, may be known in a great measure by their followers; they who have the spirit of error, and are of the world, they are followed, and caressed, and applauded by the men of the world, by unregenerate persons; they who have the spirit of truth, and are of God, they are heard and approved of, and embraced by spiritual men, by such who know God in Christ, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

**Ver. 7.** *Beloved, let its love one another, &c.*] The apostle having finished what he proposed to say concerning the trying of spirits, returns to his former exhortation to brotherly love, and which comes with fresh force and strength; for since worldly men follow, hear, embrace, and cleave to the false teachers; such as are of God, and on the side of truth, should love one another, and their faithful ministers, and stand fast in one spirit by the truths of the Gospel, in opposition to every error:

*for love is of God:* to love one another is the command of God, it is his revealed will, and is well pleasing in his sight; it comes from him, is a gift of his grace, and a fruit of his Spirit, and which he teaches regenerate ones to exercise:

*and everyone that loveth* God, as the Alexandrian copy reads, or Christ, and the saints, who seem to be particularly meant:

*is born of God;* for love to the brethren is an evidence of regeneration; (see Gill on “<sup><100></sup>1 John 3:14”);

*and knoweth God;* he knows God in Christ, and therefore loves those who have the grace of God in them, and the image of Christ upon them; he knows the mind and will of God, being taught of God to love the brethren; and he knows the love of God, and has had an experience of the grace of God, which influences him to love the saints.

**Ver. 8.** *He that loveth not, knoweth not God, &c.*] If a man loves not the children of God, those that are born of him, he does not know, so as to love God, the Father of them; for to pretend love to God, the begetter of them, whom he sees not, and not love those who are begotten by him, and are visible objects of respect, is a contradiction, and cannot be reconciled: (see <sup><100></sup>1 John 4:20). This clause is left out in the Ethiopic version, and is transposed in the Syriac version, which reads the text thus, “for God, is love, and whoever loveth not, knoweth not God”. By which reading, the following reason stands in close connection with (<sup><100></sup>1 John 4:7).

*For God is love;* he loves himself; there is an entire love between the three divine Persons, who are in the strictest, and in the most inconceivable and inexpressible manner affected to each other; their love is natural and essential: God loves all his creatures as such, nor does he hate any of them, as so considered; and he bears an everlasting, unchangeable, and invariable love to his elect in Christ Jesus; of which an instance is given in the following verses, and is a reason why the saints should love one another;

that they might be like their heavenly Father, by whom they are begotten, and of whom they are born, and whose children they are; seeing he is love itself, and in his breast is nothing else but love. So the Shekinah is, by the Cabalistic Jews<sup>f43</sup>, called **hbha**, “love”.

**Ver. 9.** *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, &c.*] The love of God here spoken of, and instanced in, is not his general love to all his creatures, which is shown in the make of them, and in the support of them in their beings, and in his providential care of them, and kindness to them; but his special love towards his elect, and which was before it was manifested; it was secretly in his heart from everlasting, and did not begin to be at the mission of Christ into the world, but was then in a most glaring manner manifested: there were several acts of it before, as the choice of them in Christ, the appointment of him to be their Saviour, and the covenant of grace made with him on their account; these were more secret and hidden; but now the love and kindness of God appeared, broke forth, and shone out in its glory; this is a most flagrant and notorious instance of it, in which it is exceedingly conspicuous; this is a most clear proof, a plain and full demonstration of it:

*because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world;* the sender is God the Father, who is distinguished from the Son that is sent; of which act of sending, (see Gill on “~~Exo~~ Romans 8:3”) and (see Gill on “~~Ro~~ Galatians 4:4”); and for him, who is that God against whom we have sinned, and is that lawgiver that is able to save, and to destroy, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, to send his Son to be the Saviour of sinful men is an amazing instance of love; and which appears the more manifest, when it is observed that it is “his only begotten Son” that is sent; of which (see Gill on “~~Jo~~ John 1:14”); and the place he was sent into is the world, where his people are, and where their sins are committed, he came to expiate; and where he was treated with great indignity and contempt, and suffered many things, and at last death itself: the end of his mission was,

*that we might live through him;* who were dead in Adam, dead in sin, and dead in law, and could not quicken themselves; nor obtain eternal life for themselves, by their performances. Christ came, being sent, that they might have life, and that more abundantly than Adam had in innocence, or man lost by the fall; and accordingly they were quickened together with him; when he was quickened, after he had been put to death, they were virtually

and representatively quickened and justified in him; and in consequence of his death and resurrection from the dead, they are regenerated and made spiritually alive, and live unto righteousness; and through his righteousness wrought out for them, and imputed to them, they are in a legal sense alive unto God, and alive and comfortable in their own souls, living by faith on Christ, and have a right and title to eternal life; and which they also have through him, and which is chiefly intended here; for the design is not only that they may live spiritually and comfortably here, but eternally hereafter.

**Ver. 10.** *Herein is love*, &c.] The love of God, free love, love that cannot be matched: herein it is manifested, as before; this is a clear evidence of it, an undoubted proof, and puts it out of all question:

*not that we loved God*: the love of God is antecedent to the love of his people; it was when theirs was not; when they were without love to him, yea, enemies in their minds, by wicked works, and even enmity itself, and therefore was not procured by theirs; but on the contrary, their love to him is caused by his love to them; hence his love, and a continuance in it, do not depend on theirs; nor does it vary according to theirs; wherefore there is good reason to believe it will continue, and never be removed; and this shows the sovereignty and freeness of the love of God, and that it is surprising and matchless:

*but that he loved us*; that is, God; and so the Syriac version reads, “but that God himself loved us”. The Vulgate Latin version adds, first, as in (Ⲅⲏⲛⲓⲛⲓ 1 John 4:19); the instance of this love follows:

*and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins*: this is a subordinate end to the other, mentioned in (Ⲅⲏⲛⲓⲛⲓ 1 John 4:9); for, in order that sinful men may possess everlasting life and happiness, it is necessary that their sins be expiated, or atonement be made for them, which is meant by Christ's being a propitiation for them; that the justice of God should be satisfied; that peace and righteousness, or love and justice, should be reconciled together; and kiss each other; and that all obstructions be removed out of the way of the enjoyment of life, which are brought in by sin; and that the wrath of God, which sin deserved, be averted or appeased, according to our sense apprehension of it; for otherwise the love of God people is from everlasting, and is unchangeable, never alters, or never changes from love to wrath, or from wrath to love; nor is the love of God procured by the satisfaction and sacrifice of Christ, which are the effects of it; but hereby the way is laid open for the display of it, and the application of its effects,

in a way consistent with the law and justice of God. This phrase is expressive of the great love of Christ to his people, and of his substitution in their room and stead; and so it is used among the Jews for a substitution in the room of others, **wtbha bwrl** , “to express the greatness of love”<sup>f44</sup>; (see Gill on “**⚭25** Romans 3:25”) and (see Gill on “**⚭3** Romans 9:3”).

**Ver. 11.** *Beloved, if God so loved us, &c.*] As to send his Son to be a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, and to obtain eternal life for us through his sufferings and death: the apostle uses the same language his Lord and master did, (**⚭6** John 3:16);

*we ought also to love one another*; for those who are the objects of God's love ought to be the objects of ours; and if God has loved our fellow Christians and brethren to such a degree, as to send his Son to die for them, we ought to love them too; and if we are interested in the same love, the obligation is still the greater; and if God loved them with so great a love, when they did not love him, but were enemies to him, then surely we ought to love them now they are become the friends of God, and ours also; as God loved them freely, and when unlovely, and us likewise in the same manner, and under the same circumstances, then we ought to love, and continue to love the saints, though there may be something in their temper and conduct disagreeable: God is to be imitated in his love; and his love to us, which is unmerited and matchless, should influence and engage us to the love of the brethren, who have a far greater claim to our love than we can make to the love of God; and which indeed is none at all, but what he is pleased to give us.

**Ver. 12.** *No man hath seen God at any time, &c.*] The same is said by the Evangelist John, (**⚭18** John 1:18); but here it is observed with a different view, and upon another account; there it signifies that no man has seen and looked into the counsels and designs of God, and been able to make a discovery and declaration of his mind and will, his love and grace, and which is there ascribed to the Son of God, (see Gill on “**⚭18** John 1:18”); but here the sense is, that whereas God is invisible in his nature, and incomprehensible in his being and perfections, so that there is no coming to him, and seeing of him, and conversing with him in a familiar way, and so not of loving him as he is in himself, and ought to be loved, as one friend sees, converses with, and loves another, and finds his love increased by sight and conversation; then we ought to love the saints and people of God, who are visible, may be seen, come at, and conversed with, (see **⚭1**

John 4:20); for this clause stands among the arguments and reasons for brotherly love:

*if we love one another God dwelleth in us*; not as he does in his Son, by union of nature; nor as in heaven, by the displays of his glory; nor as in the whole world, by his omnipresence and power; but by his Spirit, and the communications of his love, and by his gracious presence and communion, which he indulges the saints with; for such who love one another, as they appear to have the Spirit of God, of which that grace is a fruit, so they are by the Spirit built up a fit habitation for God, and by which Spirit he dwells in them; and such may expect the presence of God, for they who live in peace, the God of love and peace shall be with them:

*and his love is perfected in us*; not that love of God, with which he loves his people; for that admits of no degrees, and is not more or less in itself, or in his heart; but is always invariably and unchangeably the same, and is full, complete, and perfect in his own breast, as it was from all eternity; and does not pass by degrees, or gradually rise from a love of benevolence to a love of complacency and delight, or increase as our love does to him and to one another, on which it has no dependence: nor is this love perfected in the saints in this life; that is to say, they have not perfect knowledge and enjoyment of it; nor have they all the effects of it bestowed upon them, and applied unto them; the perfection of it, in this sense, will be in heaven: but the love with which God is loved is here designed; and it is called his, because he is both the object and the author of it; and this is no effect as to degrees; yea, sometimes, instead of abounding and increasing, it goes back, it is left, and waxes cold; and it will not have its completion till the saints come to heaven, and then it will be in its full perfection and glory, when faith and hope shall be no more: but the sense is, that this grace of love is sincere and hearty, and without dissimulation; it is unfeigned love; and it is in deed and in truth, and not in word and in tongue only; and this appears to be so, by the love which is shown to the brethren, the children of God; so that love to God in the saints is perfected by love to the brethren, just in such sense as faith is made perfect by works, (<sup>3102</sup>James 2:22), that is, is made to appear to be genuine, right, and true.

**Ver. 13.** *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us*, &c.] That there is a communion between God and us, and a communication of his love and grace to us, and an exercise of grace upon him; for God dwells in

his people by his Spirit and grace, and they dwell in him by the exercise of faith and love upon him: and this is known,

*because he hath given us of his Spirit:* not of the essence and nature of the Spirit, which is the same with the nature of the Father and of the Son, and is incommunicable; but either of the gifts of the Spirit, which are divided to every man as he pleases, and which being bestowed on men, and used by them, for the profit and advantage of the church of God, show that God is with them, and dwells among them of a truth; or of the graces of the Spirit, such as faith, hope, and love, which are each the gifts of God; and these being bestowed and exercised, are proofs of the mutual indwelling of God and his people; (see Gill on “~~and~~ 1 John 3:24”).

**Ver. 14.** *And we have seen, and do testify,* &c.] This seems to be particularly said of the apostles, who had a clear discerning of the love and grace of God, manifested in the mission of Christ into the world; for though no man had seen his nature and his person, yet they had seen his love, and the exceeding riches of his grace, which he had shown forth in Christ Jesus; and they had also seen Christ, God manifest in the flesh; they had seen his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father; they had seen him with their bodily eyes; they had seen his works and miracles; they had seen him dying and risen again from the dead, and go up to heaven; they were witnesses, and eyewitnesses of him, and bore a faithful testimony of him, and for him, and particularly set their seal to this truth,

*that the Father sent the Son [to be] the Saviour of the world;* not of every individual person in it, for there are some that will go into everlasting punishment, and even a world that will be condemned; Christ is not in fact the Saviour of all the individuals of human nature, and therefore was not sent to be such; for if he was, the end of his mission is not fully answered; nor of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also, and who are chiefly intended by “the world”; (see Gill on “~~and~~ 1 John 2:2”); and even of all the elect of God, styled his people, his sheep, his friends, his church, and the sons of God; and it may be said of all that believe in him throughout the whole world, without any distinction of nation, age, sex, state, or condition: and Christ is the Saviour both of the souls and bodies of these, from all their sins, original and actual; from the power of Satan, the bondage and curse of the law, and wrath to come, and he is the only, able, willing, and complete Saviour, and who saves with an everlasting salvation.

**Ver. 15.** *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, &c.*] The only begotten of the Father; that he is not a mere man, as the Jews, and Ebion and Cerinthus said, but a divine person, equal with the Father; which contains all that relates to the dignity of his person, and his fitness for his office as a Saviour, and which was the test of faith in those times, and the grand article of belief: not that a bare assent to this had what followed annexed to it; for the devils believed and owned that Jesus was the Son of God; and so might, and did, unregenerate persons, as the centurion at the cross of Christ, who know nothing what communion with God is; but this confession is such as is attended with a believing in Christ from the heart unto righteousness, life, and salvation, and a cheerful obedience to his ordinances and commands, from a principle of love to him, and faith in him, things not to be found in devils and carnal men; (see <sup>509</sup>Romans 10:9,10).

*God dwelleth in him, and he in God;* (see Gill on “<sup>513</sup>1 John 4:13”); this should encourage to an open and hearty confession of Christ as the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners, and to a public profession of his name, and faith in him, and an holding it fast without wavering.

**Ver. 16.** *And we have known and believed, &c.*] Or have a full assurance and knowledge of, and faith in,

*the love that God hath to us;* shown as in many instances, so more especially in sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, to be the Saviour of us, and that we might live through him.

*God is love;* (see Gill on “<sup>518</sup>1 John 4:8”):

*and he that dwelleth in love;* who dwells by faith upon the love of God as displayed in Christ, and abides in the exercise of love to God and to the saints:

*dwelleth in God, and God in him;* (see Gill on “<sup>513</sup>1 John 4:13”); the last clause, “and God in him”, is left out in the Syriac version.

**Ver. 17.** *Herein is our love made perfect, &c.*] Or love with us; which some understand of the love of God towards his people, and which is shed abroad in them: this indeed removes all fear of an awful judgment, and renders that amiable and desirable; and such who are interested in it, shall stand in that day with intrepidity and boldness; and this sense may seem to be favoured by the Syriac version, which reads, “his love with us”; and

especially by the Vulgate Latin version, which renders it, “the love of God with us”; but it is best to understand it agreeably to the context, of our love to God, which is with and in our hearts; and which is made, or made to appear to be perfect, true, and genuine, by our love to the brethren; since the love of God to us does not admit of degrees, nor does it, or the reality and sincerity of it, depend upon our love to the saints; (see Gill on “[1 John 4:12](#)”);

*that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*; not of men's judgment, when brought before judges, governors, and kings, for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, and stand at their bar, where saints, who have true love to God and Christ and the brethren, have stood with great courage and intrepidity, and shown much boldness, and used great freedom of speech; nor of judgment in this life, which sometimes begins at the house of God, though the saints often have great boldness and presence of mind, and freedom of expression both to God and man in a day of affliction, as Job had; but of the future judgment, which, though it will be very awful and solemn, Christ the Judge will appear with great majesty and glory, and all men will stand before him, and the books will be opened, and the judgment will proceed with great strictness and justice, and will issue in the everlasting perdition of devils and wicked men, yet the saints will have boldness in it: while evil men and devils tremble at the thoughts of it now, they rejoice and are glad; they love it, look for it, long for it, and hasten to it; and will stand fearless, and without the least dread, while others will flee to the rocks, and into the holes of the earth; and they will use freedom of speech with Christ, as the word here signifies; they will sing his new song, and ascribe the glory of their salvation to him, and express their praises of him, and love to him, then and to all eternity: and this boldness the saints may be said to arrive at through a perfect, or sincere, and genuine love of the brethren; for by this they know they are born again, and are born to an inheritance incorruptible, which they have both a meetness for, and a right unto; and knowing hereby that they are passed from death to life, they justly conclude they shall not enter into condemnation, and therefore are not afraid of the awful judgment: hereby they know that their faith is right, and that therefore they are manifestly the children of God; and if children, then heirs, and so shall be saved, and have everlasting life:

*because as he is, so are we in this world*; which may be understood either of God, to whom the saints are like; for such who are born again, as those who love the brethren are, they are partakers of the divine nature, and bear

a resemblance to God, even in this present state of things; and as it becomes them to be holy in all manner of conversation, as he is holy, and to be merciful to wicked men, as he is merciful, so to love the saints as he does, and to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgive one another, as he for Christ's sake has forgiven them; for as God is love, they should be all love likewise; or of Christ, (see <sup>ⲀⲚⲔⲔ</sup>1 John 3:3,7); and that with respect to God; as he is the Son of God, so are they the sons of God; he by nature, they by grace and adoption; as he is loved by God with an everlasting and unchangeable love, with a love of complacency and delight, so are they loved by him with the same kind of love, even while they are in this world; and as he is the chosen of God, and precious, so they are chosen in him, and unto salvation by him. The Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, render it, "as he was": and the sense may be, as he was in this world, so are they; and which may regard not so much likeness in nature, though there is an agreement in that, excepting sin, but the sameness of state and condition; as he was a man of sorrows, attended with afflictions, loaded with reproaches, and followed with the persecutions of men, so are they; nor need they wonder that they are the objects of the world's hatred and contempt, since he was also; as he was tempted by Satan, forsaken by his friends, and deserted by his God, so sometimes are they in this world; and as he went through a variety of sufferings, and death itself, to glory, so through many tribulations do they enter the kingdom: moreover, as he now is in heaven, so are they in this world; even as he is in heaven, so are they representatively in him, while in this world; and as he is righteous, being justified and acquitted from all the charge of sin he took upon him, and therefore will appear a second time without sin, so they are completely righteous in him: and once more, as he is, so they are, or should be in this world; they should be holy as he is holy, and be humble, meek, and patient, as he is, and walk as he walked; and particularly love the saints and one another, as he does; and which seems to be greatly intended here, and must be understood not of an equality, but of a likeness. The Arabic version reads the words conditionally, and as depending on the preceding clause, "if as he was, we are in this world"; and then the sense is, that the saints shall have boldness in the day of judgment, provided they are in this world as Christ was.

**Ver. 18.** *There is no fear in love*, &c.] In the love of the brethren; where that is, there is no fear: so far as that prevails and gains ground, fear removes; not the filial fear of God, the new covenant grace of fear, which

is the beginning of wisdom, and is consistent with faith, hope, love, and spiritual joy; but either the fear of men, which brings a snare: those that truly love Christ, his Gospel, and his people, they are not afraid of men; the spirit of power, love, and of a sound mind, is opposite to a spirit of fear, nor can they stand together; and such strength there is sometimes in brotherly love, that the saints are not afraid of death itself, but freely lay down their lives for one another; (see <sup>GR16</sup>1 John 3:16); or it may be rather, that they are not afraid of the day of judgment, and of hell and damnation; where hatred of the brethren has place, there is a fear and dread of these things, as were in Cain; but those that love the brethren, they know they are passed from death to life, and shall not enter into condemnation, and therefore are in no fear of any of these things:

*but perfect love casteth out fear*; when love to the brethren appears to be perfect, that is, genuine and sincere, and a man knows that from the bottom of his heart he sincerely loves the saints, he concludes from hence, as he may, the truth of his faith, which works in this way; and this frees him from the fears of men and devils, and of the future judgment and wrath to come. The Jews have a saying <sup>f45</sup>,

“worthy is his portion that rules over the place of fear, for lo, there is nothing that rules over the degree of “fear” but “love”.”

*Because fear hath torment*: it distresses a man, fills him with anguish, and makes him restless and uneasy, and keeps him in servitude; through the fear of men, of the devil, death, judgment, and hell, he is all his lifetime, or as long as this fear lasts, subject to bondage: or “fear has punishment”, as it may be rendered, and is by the Vulgate Latin version; it is a punishment itself to a man; and its being criminal deserves punishment, and is punishable; (see <sup>GR18</sup>Revelation 21:8);

*he that feareth is not made perfect in love*; or “by love”; that is, he that is possessed, and under the power of a servile fear of punishment, is one who is not, by the love to the brethren, made to appear to himself to be a sincere lover of God, and true believer in Christ; for was he, he would not be in fear of destruction and death, since whoever truly loves God, and believes in Christ, shall certainly be saved; though such persons, at times, may not be without their doubts and fears.

**Ver. 19.** *We love him, because he first loved us.*] Lest love to God, and so to one another, should be thought to be of ourselves, and too much be

ascribed unto it, the apostle observes, that God's love to us is prior to our love to him; his love is from everlasting, as well as to everlasting; for he loves his people as he does his Son, and he loved him before the foundation of the world; his choosing them in Christ as early, and blessing them then with all spiritual blessings, the covenant of grace made with Christ from all eternity, the gift of grace to them in him before the world began, and the promise of eternal life to them so soon, show the antiquity and priority of his love: his love shown in the mission and gift of his Son was before theirs, and when they had none to him; and his love in regeneration and conversion is previous to theirs, and is the cause of it; his grace in regeneration brings faith and love with it, and produces them in the heart; and his love shed abroad there is the moving cause of it, or what draws it first into act and exercise; and the larger the discoveries and applications of the love of God be, the more does love to him increase and abound; and nothing more animates and inflames our love to God, than the consideration of the earliness of his love to us, of its being before ours; which shows that it is free, sovereign, distinguishing, and unmerited. Some read the words as an exhortation, "let us love him"; and others as in the subjunctive mood, "we should love him", because, &c. some copies read, "we love God", and so the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, and the Alexandrian copy, read, "because God first loved us": and so some others.

**Ver. 20.** *If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother,* &c.] Than which profession nothing can be more contradictory, not black and white, or hot and cold in the same degree:

*he is a liar;* it is not truth he speaks, it is a contradiction, and a thing impossible:

*for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen;* his person, which might have drawn out his affection to him; and something valuable and worthy in him, which might have commanded respect; or his wants and distresses, which should have moved his pity and compassion:

*how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* it cannot be thought he should; the thing is not reasonable to suppose; it is not possible he should; (see Gill on "[1 John 4:12](#)").

**Ver. 21.** *And this commandment have we from him,* &c.] Either "from God", as the Alexandrian copy and the Vulgate Latin version read; and that

to love the brethren is a commandment of God, is clear from (~~4173~~1 John 3:23); or from Christ, for it is also a command of his, even his new commandment, which he has given, and his people have received from him:

*that he who loveth God, love his brother also*; (see ~~4134~~John 13:34) (~~4152~~John 15:12,17); which is an argument persuading to attend to the one as well as to the other; for the same command that requires the one, requires the other: and he that transgresses it in one case, is a transgressor of it, as well as in the other.

# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN 5

In this chapter the apostle treats of the nature of faith and love; of Christ the object of both, and of the witness that is bore to him; of the necessity of believing the testimony concerning him; of the confidence of prayer being heard, and concerning whom it should be made; of the happiness of regenerate persons, and of their duty to keep themselves from idols. Faith in Christ is the evidence of regeneration, and where that is, there will be love to the author of regeneration, and to them that are regenerated; and love to them is known by love to God, and keeping his commandments; and keeping the commandments of God, and which are not grievous, is a proof of love to God, (~~GRB~~ 1 John 5:1-3); and whereas every regenerate man overcomes the world, it is by his faith, the evidence of his regeneration, that this victory is obtained; nor can any other man be pointed out that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God, (~~GRB~~ 1 John 5:4,5); and Christ, the Son of God, the object of this victorious faith, is described by his coming by water and blood, of which the spirit is witness, who is a true one; and six witnesses of the truth of this and his divine sonship are produced, three in heaven, the Father, Word, and Spirit, who are the one God, and three on earth, the Spirit, water, and blood, who agree in their testimony, (~~GRB~~ 1 John 5:6-8); wherefore this testimony concerning the Son of God ought to be received, since it is the testimony of God, which is greater than that of men; besides, he that believes in Christ has a witness of this in himself, and honours God, whereas he that believes not makes God a liar, not giving credit to his record concerning his Son; the sum of which is, that God has made a grant of eternal life to some persons, which is in his Son, which those that believe in the Son of God have, but those that do not believe in him have it not: all which show the necessity of receiving the above testimony; and the ends proposed in writing these things were, to believe in Christ, and that it might be known they had eternal life in him, (~~GRB~~ 1 John 5:9-13), and from faith in Christ the apostle passes to confidence in prayer, as a particular effect and fruit of it: as, that whatever is asked according to the will of God is heard; and that such who are satisfied of this, that they are heard, may be assured

that they have the petitions they desire to have, (~~1~~ John 5:14,15), and whereas it is one branch of prayer to pray for others as well as for ourselves, the apostle directs who we should pray for; for the brethren in general, and in particular for such who have sinned, but not unto death, and life shall be given to such: but as for those who have sinned unto death, he does not say prayer should be made for them, for though all unrighteousness in general is sin, yet there is a particular sin which is unto death, and is not to be prayed for, (~~1~~ John 5:16,17); but happy are those who are born of God, for they do not sin this sin; and through the use of the armour of God, and the power of divine grace, they keep themselves from the evil one, and he cannot come at them, to draw them into this sin; also they know that they are of God, and are distinguished from the world, which lies in wickedness; yea, they know that the Son of God is come in the flesh, and hath given them an understanding of the true God, by which they know that they are in him, and in his Son Jesus Christ, who is with him, and the divine Spirit, the one true God, and the author and giver of eternal life, (~~1~~ John 5:18-20); and the chapter, and with it the epistle, is concluded with an exhortation to these regenerate ones, as they had kept themselves from Satan, that they would also keep themselves from idols of all sorts, (~~1~~ John 5:21).

**Ver. 1.** *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, &c.*] Or the Messiah that was prophesied of old, was long promised to the Jews, and whom they expected; there was a person spoken of in the writings of the Old Testament under this character, (~~Psalm~~ 2:2 ~~Daniel~~ 9:25,26); and the Jews looked for him; and Jesus of Nazareth is he, as appears by all the characteristics of the Messiah in prophecy being found upon him: this the Jews deny, but is the grand article of faith embraced by the apostles and followers of Jesus, and is of very great importance; he that denies it is a liar, and he that does not believe it shall die in his sins: the word signifies “anointed”, and includes all the offices of the Son of God, to which he was anointed, as prophet, priest, and King; so that to believe him to be the Christ, is to believe him to be that prophet Moses said should come, and who has declared the whole mind and will of his Father; and that he is that priest that should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and make atonement for sin, and intercession for transgressors; and that he is that King whom God has set over his holy hill of Zion, whose laws are to be obeyed, and his commands observed: but to believe that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah, is not barely to give an assent to this truth, or to

acknowledge it; so the devils themselves have done, (~~☩~~Luke 4:41); and whole nations of men, multitudes of which were never born of God; it is not a mere profession of it before men, or an idle, inoperative faith, which is destitute of love to Christ, and obedience to him; but whereas his work and business, as the Christ of God, was to bring in an everlasting righteousness, to procure the remission of sin, and to make peace and reconciliation for it, and to obtain eternal salvation; true faith in him as the Messiah is a believing with the heart unto righteousness, or a looking to, and trusting in the righteousness of Christ for justification; and a dealing with his blood for pardon and cleansing, under a sense of guilt and filth; and a laying hold on his atoning sacrifice for the expiation of sin, and peace with God; and a reception of him as the only Saviour and Redeemer, or a dependence on him for life and salvation; and which faith shows itself in love to him, and in a professed subjection to his Gospel, and cheerful submission to his ordinances: and every such person

*is born of God*; is a partaker of the divine nature; has Christ formed, and every grace of the Spirit implanted in him, among which faith in Christ is a considerable one; and such an one in consequence is openly a child and heir of God, wherefore, to be born of God is an instance of great grace, and an high honour and privilege, and of the greatest moment and importance. Regeneration is not owing to the power and will of man, but to the abundant mercy and good will of God, and is an instance of his rich mercy, great love, and free favour, and commands love again:

*and everyone that loveth him that begat*; that is, God the Father, who has begotten them again to a lively hope, according to his abundant mercy and sovereign will; and as he is their Father that has begotten them, they cannot but love him: and such an one

*loveth him also that is begotten of him*; not only Jesus Christ, who by nature is the only begotten of the Father; for those who know God to be their Father by adoption and regeneration, will love Christ, who is the Son of God by nature; (see ~~☩~~John 8:42); but also every regenerate person, all that are born of God; since they are the children of the same Father with them, belong to the same household and family, and bear the image and likeness of their heavenly Father on them.

**Ver. 2.** *By this we know that we are the children God*, &c.] The Ethiopic version reads, “by this know that we love God”; which, in connection with what follows, makes a tautology, and is a proving “idem per idem”:

whereas the apostle's view is to show when love to the saints is right; and that is,

*when we love God, and keep his commandments*: love to the brethren may arise from such a cause, as may show that it is not brotherly love, or of a spiritual kind; it may arise from natural relation, or civil friendship, or from a benefit or favour received from them, and from some natural external excellency seen in them; and a man may do acts of love and kindness to the brethren, from what may be called good nature in himself, or with sinister views; but true love to the brethren springs from love to God: such who love the saints aright, and by which they may know they do so, they love them because they themselves love God, and in obedience to his command; they love them because they belong to God, and are the objects of his love; because his grace is wrought in them, and his image stamped upon them.

**Ver. 3.** *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, &c.*] Keeping of the commandments of God is an evidence of love to God; this shows that love is not in word and tongue, in profession only, but in deed and in truth; and that such persons have a sense of the love of God upon their souls, under the influence of which they act; and such shall have, and may expect to have, greater manifestations of the love of God unto them:

*and his commandments are not grievous*; heavy, burdensome, and disagreeable; by which are meant, not so much the precepts of the moral law, which through the weakness of the flesh are hard to be kept, and cannot be perfectly fulfilled; though believers indeed, being freed from the rigorous exaction, curse, and condemnation of the law, delight in it after the inward man, and serve it cheerfully with their spirit; and still less the commands of the ceremonial law, which were now abolished, and were grievous to be borne; but rather those of faith in Christ, and love to the saints, (<sup>1</sup> John 3:23); or it may be the ordinances of the Gospel, baptism, and the Lord's supper, with others, which though disagreeable to unregenerate persons, who do not care to be under the yoke of Christ, however easy and light it is, yet are not heavy and burdensome to regenerate ones; and especially when they have the love of God shed abroad in them, the presence of God with them, communion with Jesus Christ, and a supply of grace and strength from him; then are these ways ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace, and the tabernacles of the Lord are amiable and lovely.

**Ver. 4.** *For whatsoever is born of God, &c.*] Which may be understood either of persons born; of God; or of the new creature, or principle of grace wrought in them, particularly faith hereafter mentioned, which is an heaven born grace, the gift of God, and the operation of his Spirit: this

*overcometh the world;* the god of the world, Satan; the lusts which are in the world; false prophets gone forth into the world; and the wicked men of the world, who by temptations, snares, evil doctrines, threatenings, promises, and ill examples, would avert regenerate ones from observing the commands of God; but such are more than conquerors over all these, through Christ that has loved them:

*and this is the victory that overcometh the world, [even] our faith.* The Arabic and Ethiopic versions read, “your faith”; great things, heroic actions, and wonderful victories, are ascribed to faith; (see <sup>8113</sup> Hebrews 11:33,34); which must not be understood of the grace itself, as separately considered, but of Christ the object of it, as supported, strengthened, assisted, and animated by him: and then it does wonders, when it is enabled to hold Christ, its shield, in its hand, against every enemy that opposes.

**Ver. 5.** *Who is he that overcometh the world, &c.*] This question carries in it a strong affirmation, that no other person is the conqueror of the world:

*but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* and this points out what that faith is which obtains the victory over the world; and shows that it is not that trust and confidence which has a man's self, or any mere creature, thing, or person, for its object, but only Jesus Christ, and that as he is the Son of God; and which is not a mere assent to such a proposition, to which devils and unregenerate persons may assent, and do; but it is a seeing of the Son in the glory, fulness, and suitableness of his person, office, and grace; a going to him, being drawn by the Father; and a living upon him as the Son of God, and trusting in him for life, righteousness, and salvation: and this shows, that the victory over the world is not owing to faith itself, but to its object Christ, who has overcome it, and makes true believers in him more than conquerors over it.

**Ver. 6.** *This is he that came by water and blood, [even] Jesus Christ, &c.*] By “water” is not meant the ablutions or washings of the ceremonial law; Christ came not by these, but to make an end of them; his blood, which cleanseth from all sin, being the antitype, and so the fulfilling end of them: nor the purity of his nature, life, and conversation; though he came into the

world that holy thing which is called the Son of God; and was holy in his nature, and harmless in his life, and did no sin, and so was fit to be a sacrifice for the sins of others: nor does it intend the washing and cleansing of his people from their sins; this is what he came to do, and has done, and not what he came by: but the ordinance of water baptism is designed; and though Christ did not come baptizing with water, he having a greater baptism to administer, yet that he might be made manifest, John came baptizing in that way; and Christ, as the Son of God, came, or was made manifest by John as such, at the waters of Jordan, and at his baptism; there he was declared to be the Son of God by his Father's voice from heaven:

*not by water only*; he did not come by water only, as Moses did, who was drawn out of it, and therefore so called; or as John, who came administering water baptism externally only:

*but by water and blood*; by “blood” as well as water; by which is meant, not the blood of bulls and goats; Christ came to put an end unto, and lay aside the shedding of that blood; but his own blood is intended, and not reconciliation and atonement for the sins of his people, which was what he came to do, and has done, and not what he came by: but the sense is, that as at baptism, so at his sufferings and death, he was made manifest to be the Son of God; as he was to the centurion and others, that were with him, when they observed the earthquake, and the things that were done; and at his from the dead he was declared to be the Son of God with power: and this might be seen in the cleansing and atoning virtue of his blood, which is owing to his being the Son of God. There may be here an allusion to the water and blood which came out of his side, when pierced on the cross, which this Apostle John was an eyewitness of. Some copies add here, and in the former clause, “and by the Spirit”; as the Alexandrian copy, three of Beza's copies, and the Ethiopic version: but it seems unnecessary, since it follows,

*and it is the Spirit that beareth witness*; by which may be meant, either the Gospel, which is the Spirit that gives life, and is so called, because by it the Spirit of God, in his gifts and graces, is received, and which is a testimony of the person, as well as of the offices, and grace of Christ; or rather those miraculous works which Christ did by the Spirit, to which he often appeals, as witnesses of his divine sonship, and equality with the Father, as well as of his being the true Messiah; or else the Holy Spirit, who bore testimony to Christ, by his descent on him at his baptism, and upon his apostles at the

day of Pentecost, and by attending, succeeding, and confirming the Gospel, which is the testimony of him; and he is elsewhere, as well as here, and in the context, spoken of as a witness of Christ, (~~415~~ Acts 5:32);

*because the Spirit is truth*; he is the Spirit of truth, and truth itself; he is essentially truth; his testimony is most true, and firmly to be believed. The Vulgate Latin version reads, “because Christ is the truth”.

**Ver. 7.** *For there are three that bear record in heaven*, &c.] That is, that Jesus is the Son of God. The genuineness of this text has been called in question by some, because it is wanting in the Syriac version, as it also is in the Arabic and Ethiopic versions; and because the old Latin interpreter has it not; and it is not to be found in many Greek manuscripts; nor cited by many of the ancient fathers, even by such who wrote against the Arians, when it might have been of great service to them: to all which it may be replied, that as to the Syriac version, which is the most ancient, and of the greatest consequence, it is but a version, and a defective one. The history of the adulterous woman in the eighth of John, the second epistle of Peter, the second and third epistles of John, the epistle of Jude, and the book of the Revelations, were formerly wanting in it, till restored from Bishop Usher's copy by Deuteronomy Dieu and Dr. Pocock, and who also, from an eastern copy, has supplied this version with this text. As to the old Latin interpreter, it is certain it is to be seen in many Latin manuscripts of an early date, and stands in the Vulgate Latin edition of the London Polyglot Bible: and the Latin translation, which bears the name of Jerom, has it, and who, in an epistle of his to Eustochium, prefixed to his translation of these canonical epistles, complains of the omission of it by unfaithful interpreters. And as to its being wanting in some Greek manuscripts, as the Alexandrian, and others, it need only be said, that it is to be found in many others; it is in an old British copy, and in the Complutensian edition, the compilers of which made use of various copies; and out of sixteen ancient copies of Robert Stephens's, nine of them had it: and as to its not being cited by some of the ancient fathers, this can be no sufficient proof of the spuriousness of it, since it might be in the original copy, though not in the copies used by them, through the carelessness or unfaithfulness of transcribers; or it might be in their copies, and yet not cited by them, they having Scriptures enough without it, to defend the doctrine of the Trinity, and the divinity of Christ: and yet, after all, certain it is, that it is cited by many of them; by Fulgentius<sup>f46</sup>, in the beginning of the “sixth” century, against the Arians, without any scruple or hesitation; and Jerom, as before

observed, has it in his translation made in the latter end of the “fourth” century; and it is cited by Athanasius<sup>f47</sup> about the year 350; and before him by Cyprian<sup>f48</sup>, in the middle, of the “third” century, about the year 250; and is referred to by Tertullian<sup>f49</sup> about, the year 200; and which was within a “hundred” years, or little more, of the writing of the epistle; which may be enough to satisfy anyone of the genuineness of this passage; and besides, there never was any dispute about it till Erasmus left it out in the, first edition of his translation of the New Testament; and yet he himself, upon the credit of the old British copy before mentioned, put it into another edition of his translation. The heavenly witnesses of Christ's sonship are,

*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.* The “Father” is the first Person, so called, not in, reference to the creatures, angels, or men, he is the Creator, and so the Father of; for this is common to the other two Persons; but in reference to his Son Jesus Christ, of whose sonship he bore witness at his baptism and transfiguration upon the mount. The “Word” is the second Person, who said and it was done; who spoke all things out of nothing in the first creation; who was in the beginning with God the Father, and was God, and by whom all things were created; he declared himself to be the Son of God, and proved himself to be so by his works and miracles; (see <sup><1143></sup>Mark 14:61,62 <sup><1177></sup>John 5:17 10:30), &c. and his witness of himself was good and valid; (see <sup><1183></sup>John 8:13-18); and because it is his sonship that is, here testified of, therefore the phrase, “the Word”, and not “the Son”, is here used. “The Holy Ghost” is the third Person, who proceeds from the Father, and is also called the Spirit of the Son, who testified of, Christ's sonship also at his baptism, by descending on him as a dove, which was the signal given to John the Baptist, by which he knew him, and bare record of him, that he was the Son of God. Now the number of these witnesses was three, there being so many persons in the Godhead; and such a number being sufficient, according to law, for the establishing of any point: to which may be added, that they were witnesses in heaven, not to the heavenly inhabitants, but to men on earth; they were so called, because they were in heaven, and from thence gave out their testimony; and which shows the firmness and excellency of it, it being not from earth, but from heaven, and not human, but divine; to which may be applied the words of Job, in (<sup><1169></sup>Job 16:19); it follows,

*and these three are one;* which is to be understood, not only of their unity and agreement in their testimony, they testifying of the same thing, the sonship of Christ; but of their unity in essence or nature, they being the one

God. So that, this passage holds forth and asserts the unity of God, a trinity of persons in the Godhead, the proper deity of each person, and their distinct personality, the unity of essence in that they are one; a trinity of persons in that they are three, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and are neither more nor fewer; the deity of each person, for otherwise their testimony would not be the testimony of God, as in (~~6180~~ 1 John 5:9); and their distinct personality; for were they not three distinct persons, they could not be three testifiers, or three that bare record. This being a proper place, I shall insert the faith of the ancient Jews concerning the doctrine of the Trinity; and the rather, as it agrees with the apostle's doctrine in words and language, as well as in matter. They call the three Persons in the Godhead three degrees: they say <sup>f50</sup>,

“Jehovah, Elohenu (our God), Jehovah, (~~6180~~ Deuteronomy 6:4); these are the three degrees with respect to this sublime mystery, in the beginning Elohim, or God, created, (~~6000~~ Genesis 1:1), &c.”

And these three, they say, though they are distinct, yet are one, as appears by what follows <sup>f51</sup>:

“come see the mystery of the word; there are three degrees, and every degree is by itself, yet they are all one, and are bound together in one, and one is not separated from the other.”

Again, it is said <sup>f52</sup>,

“this is the unity of Jehovah the first, Elohenu, Jehovah, lo, all of them are one, and therefore: called one; lo, the three names are as if they were one, and therefore are called one, and they are one; but by the revelation of the Holy Spirit it is made known, and they by the sight of the eye may be known, **dj a Nyl a atI td**, “that these three are one”: and this is the mystery of the voice which is heard; the voice is one, and there are three things, fire, and Spirit, and water, and all of them are one in the mystery of the voice, and they are but one: so here, Jehovah, Elohenu, Jehovah, they are one, the three, **Nynwwg**, forms, modes, or things, which are one.”

Once more <sup>f53</sup>,

“there are two, and one is joined unto them, and they are three; and when the three are one, he says to them, these are the two names which Israel heard, Jehovah, Jehovah, and Elohenu is joined unto

them, and it is the seal of the ring of truth; and when they are joined as one, they are one in one unity.”

And this they illustrate by the three names of the soul of man <sup>f54</sup>;

“the three powers are all of them one, the soul, spirit, and breath, they are joined as one, and they are one; and all is according to the mode of the sublime mystery,”

meaning the Trinity.

“Says R. Isaac <sup>f55</sup> worthy are the righteous in this world, and in the world to come, for lo, the whole of them is holy, their body is holy, their soul is holy, their Spirit is holy, their breath is holy, holy are these three degrees “according to the form above”. — Come see these three degrees cleave together as one, the soul, Spirit, and breath.”

The three first Sephirot, or numbers, in the Cabalistic tree, intend the three divine Persons; the first is called the chief crown, and first glory, which essence no creature can comprehend <sup>f56</sup>, and designs the Father, (~~4018~~ John 1:18); the second is called wisdom, and the intelligence illuminating, the crown of the creation, the brightness of equal unity, who is exalted above every head; and he is called, by the Cabalists, the second glory <sup>f57</sup>; (see ~~4024~~ 1 Corinthians 1:24 ~~4009~~ John 1:9 ~~4184~~ Revelation 3:14) (~~4008~~ Hebrews 1:3 ~~4021~~ Ephesians 1:21). This is the Son of God: the third is called understanding sanctifying, and is the foundation of ancient wisdom, which is called the worker of faith; and he is the parent of faith, and from his power faith flows <sup>f58</sup>; and this is the Holy Spirit; (see ~~4000~~ 1 Peter 1:2 ~~4043~~ 2 Corinthians 4:13). Now they say <sup>f59</sup> that these three first numbers are intellectual, and are not **twadm**, “properties”, or “attributes”, as the other seven are. R. Simeon ben Jochai says <sup>f60</sup>,

“of the three superior numbers it is said, (~~4921~~ Psalm 62:11), “God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this”; one and two, lo the superior numbers of whom it is said, one, one, one, three ones, and this is the mystery of (~~4921~~ Psalm 62:11).”

Says R. Judah Levi <sup>f61</sup>,

“behold the mystery of the numberer, the number, and the numbered; in the bosom of God it is one thing, in the bosom of man

three; because he weighs with his understanding, and speaks with his mouth, and writes with his hand.”

It was usual with the ancient Jews to introduce Jehovah speaking, or doing anything, in this form, I and my house of judgment; and it is a rule with them, that wherever it is said, “and Jehovah”, he and his house or judgment are intended <sup>f62</sup>; and Jarchi frequently makes use of this phrase to explain texts where a plurality in the Godhead is intended, as (~~(10026)~~ Genesis 1:26 ~~(2011)~~ Song of Solomon 1:11); and it is to be observed, that a house of judgment, or a sanhedrim, among the Jews, never consisted of less than three. They also had used to write the word “Jehovah” with three “Jods”, in the form of a triangle,

y            y y

as representing the three divine Persons: one of their more modern <sup>f63</sup> writers has this observation on the blessing of the priest in (~~(10124)~~ Numbers 6:24-26):

“these three verses begin with a “Jod”, in reference to the three “Jods” which we write in the room of the name, (i.e. Jehovah,) for they have respect to the three superior things.”

**Ver. 8.** *And there are three that bear witness on earth, &c.]* To the same truth of the sonship of Christ:

*the Spirit, and the water, and the blood;* by the “Spirit” is not meant the human Spirit or soul of Christ; for however that may be a witness of the truth of his human nature, yet not of his divine sonship: and moreover cannot be said to be a witness in earth; rather the Gospel, called the Spirit, which is a testimony of Christ's person, office, and graces and is preached by men on earth; or else the gifts of the Spirit bestowed on men on earth, both in an extraordinary and ordinary way, by which they have been qualified to bear witness to this truth; or it may be the Holy Spirit itself is intended, as he is in the hearts of his people here on earth, where he not only witnesses to the truth of their sonship, but also of the sonship of Christ, and is that witness a believer has within himself of it, mentioned in (~~(6150)~~ 1 John 5:10). By water is designed, not internal sanctification, which though an evidence of regeneration and adoption, yet not of Christ's sonship; but water baptism, as administered on earth in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and which is a noble and standing testimony to the proper, natural, and eternal sonship of Christ: and by “blood” is intended, not justification by the blood of Christ, but

rather the blood of the saints, the martyrs of Jesus, who have shed it on earth, in testimony of their faith in the Son of God, and thereby sealing the truth of it; or rather the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which is the communion of the blood of Christ; and represents that blood which was shed for the remission of sins, and has a continual virtue to cleanse from all sin, which is owing to his being the Son of God. The three witnesses on earth seem therefore to be the Gospel, attended with the Spirit and power of God, and the two ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's supper:

*and these agree in one*; in their testimony of Christ, the word and ordinances agree together; and the sum and substance of them is Christ; they come from him, and centre in him; they are like the cherubim over the mercy seat, that looked to one another, and to that; and the two ordinances are the church's two breasts, which are equal, and like to one another; there is a great agreement between them, they are like to two young roes that are twins.

**Ver. 9.** *If we receive the witness of men*, &c.] The witness of a sufficient number of credible men, of men of good character and report, is always admitted in any case, and in any court of judicature; it was allowed of in the law of Moses; everything was proved and established hereby; upon this men were justified or condemned, cognizance was taken of men's sins, and punishment inflicted, yea, death itself, (<sup><5176></sup>Deuteronomy 17:6 19:15 <sup><5108></sup>Hebrews 10:28); and even in this case concerning the Son of God, his coming into the world, and the dignity of his person, the testimony of men is credited; as that of the wise men, who declared that the King of the Jews was born, and his star had been seen in the east, which Herod himself gave credit to, and upon it summoned the chief priests, and inquired of them where he should be born; and also of the shepherds, who testified to the appearance of angels, who told them that there was then born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord, and who also related that they themselves saw the infant at Bethlehem; and especially of John the Baptist, whose testimony was true, and could not be objected to by the Jews themselves, who sent to him, before whom he bore a plain and faithful witness. Now if an human testimony may be, and is received,

*the testimony of God is greater*; more valuable, surer, and to be more firmly depended on, since it must be infallible; for God can neither deceive, nor be deceived:

*for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son;* even the witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, is the testimony, not of men, but of God; the Gospel, attended with the Spirit of God, is the testimony of God; and so the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, which bear witness of Christ, are not of men, but of God; and especially the witness of the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, must be the testimony of God, since, though three persons, they are one God; particularly the witness which God the Father testified of his Son Jesus Christ at his baptism and transfiguration, must be allowed to be the testimony of God, and far greater than any human testimony, and therefore to be received.

**Ver. 10.** *He that believeth on the Son of God,* &c.] As a divine person who came in the flesh, and obeyed the law, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and obtained life and salvation for men: he that with the heart believes in him for righteousness, and eternal life, he being the Son of God, truly and properly God, and so able to save all that believe in him,

*hath the witness in himself;* of the need he stands in of Christ, and of the suitability, fulness, and excellency of him; the Spirit of God enlightening him into the impurity of his nature, his impotence to do anything spiritually good, his incapacity to atone for sin, and the insufficiency of his righteousness to justify him before God; and convincing him that nothing but the blood of the Son of God can cleanse him from sin, and only his sacrifice can expiate it, and his righteousness justify him from it, and that without him he can do nothing; testifying also to the efficacy of his blood, the completeness of his sacrifice and satisfaction, the excellency of his righteousness, and the energy of his grace and strength: so he comes to have such a witness in himself, that if ten thousand arguments were ever so artfully formed, in favour of the purity of human nature, the power of man's free will, and the sufficiency of his righteousness, and against the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ, the dignity of his person, as the Son of God, which gives virtue to his blood, sacrifice, and righteousness, they would all signify nothing to him, he would be proof against them. And such an one very readily receives into him the testimony God gives of his Son, of the glory and excellency of his person, and retains it in him. The Alexandrian copy and the Vulgate Latin version read, "hath the witness of God in him"; to which the Ethiopic, version agrees, and confirm the last observation:

*he that believeth not God*; does not receive his testimony concerning his Son: the Alexandrian copy, and two of Stephens's, and the Vulgate Latin version read, "he that believeth not the Son"; and the Ethiopic version, his Son; and the Arabic version, "the Son of God"; and so is a direct antithesis to the phrase in the former clause of the verse:

*hath made him a liar*; not the Son, but God, as the Arabic version renders it, "hath made God himself a liar"; who is the God, of truth, and cannot lie; it is impossible he should; and as nothing can be, more contumelious and reproachful to the being and nature of God, so nothing can more fully expose and aggravate the sin of unbelief, with respect to Christ, as the Son of God:

*because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son*; at the times and places before observed.

**Ver. 11.** *And this is the record*, &c.] The sum and substance of it, with respect to the person of Christ, and the security of salvation in him, who is the true God, and eternal life:

*that God hath given to us eternal life*; which is a life of glory and happiness hereafter; in the present state is unseen, but will in the world to come be a life of vision, free from all the sorrows and imperfections of this; and will be of the utmost perfection and pleasure, and for ever. This is a pure free grace gift of God the Father, proceeding from his sovereigns good will and pleasure, and which he gives to all his chosen ones, for they are ordained unto eternal life; to as many as he has given to his Son; to all that are redeemed by his blood, and are brought to believe in him: to these he gave it in his Son before the world began; and to the same in time he gives the right unto it, the meetness for it, and the pledge and earnest of it; and will hereafter give them the thing itself, the whole of it, to be possessed and enjoyed by them in person, to all eternity.

*And this life is in his Son*: not only the purpose and promise of it, but that itself; Christ asked it of his Father in the covenant of peace, and he gave it to him, that he might have it in himself for all his people; and here it is safe and secure, it is hid with Christ in God, it is bound up in the bundle of life with him; and because he lives, this life will never be lost, or they come short of it.

**Ver. 12.** *He that hath the Son*, &c.] Has a spiritual and experimental knowledge of him, true faith in him; who has him dwelling in his heart, and living in him:

*hath life*: not only spiritual life, being quickened by him, and living by faith on him, but eternal life; the knowledge he has of him is eternal life; he has it in faith and hope, and has a right unto it, and the earnest of it, as well as has it in Christ his representative, whom he has, and in whom this life is:

[*and*] *he that hath not the Son of God*; no knowledge of him, nor faith in him, nor enjoyment of him:

*hath not life*; he is dead in sin, he is alienated from the life of God, has no title to eternal life, nor meetness for it, nor shall enjoy it, but shall die the second death.

**Ver. 13.** *These things have I written unto you*, &c.] Which are contained in the epistle in general, and particularly what is written in the context, concerning the victory of the world, being ascribed to him who believes that Christ is the Son of God; and concerning the six witnesses of his sonship, and the record bore by God, that the gift of eternal life is in him: and which are especially written to them,

*that believe on the name of the Son of God*; who not only believed that Christ is the Son of God, which this six fold testimony would confirm them in, but also believed in his name for righteousness, life, and salvation; in which name there is all this, and in no other; and who also professed their faith in him, and were baptized in his name, and continued believing in him, and holding fast their profession of him. The end of writing these things to them was,

*that ye may know that ye have eternal life*; that there is such a thing as eternal life; that this is in Christ; that believers have it in him, and the beginning of it in themselves; and that they have a right unto it, and meetness for it, and shall certainly enjoy it; the knowledge of which is had by faith, under the testimony of the Spirit of God, and particularly what is above written concerning eternal life, being a free grace gift of God; and this being in Christ, and the assurance of it, that such who have him, or believe in him, have that which might serve to communicate, cultivate, and increase such knowledge:

*and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*; which they had done already, and still did; the sense is, the above things were written to them concerning the Son of God, that they might be encouraged to continue believing in him, as such; to hold fast the faith of him and go on believing in him to the end; and that their faith in him might be increased; for faith is imperfect and is capable of increasing, and growing exceedingly: and nothing more tends unto, or is a more proper means of it, than the sacred writings, the reading and hearing them explained, and especially that part of them which respects the person, office, and grace of Christ. The Alexandrian copy, and one of Beza's manuscripts, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, read, "these things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, who believe in the name of the Son of God".

**Ver. 14.** *And this is the confidence that we have in him*, &c.] Either in God, to whom prayer is made; or in the Son of God, through whose blood and righteousness believers in him have confidence with God at the throne of grace; they can come with boldness and intrepidity, and use freedom and liberty of speech, as the word here used signifies; especially when they have the Spirit of Christ with them, and are under the sprinklings of the blood of Christ, and have a comfortable assurance of being heard and answered; and this is what the Jews call *hl pt Nwyę* "the consideration", or "attention of prayer"<sup>f64</sup>, which they explain thus;

"after a man has prayed, he judges in his heart that the holy blessed God will give him his reward, and will do everything needful for him, and will hear his prayer, because he has prayed with intention;"

but this is much better expressed, and upon a much better foundation, by our apostle here:

*that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us*; to ask anything according to the will of God, is to ask, as to matter, what, and in a manner which, is agreeably to it; by which is meant, not his secret will, or his purposes and decrees, which are unknown, though, so far as these are made known, they are not to be prayed against, for they can never be made void; and therefore, when God had declared it as his purposing will, that the Israelites in the wilderness should not enter into Canaan's land, and that he had rejected Saul from the kingdom, in these cases it would have been

wrong for Moses to have prayed for the one, or Samuel for the other; (<sup><B161></sup>1 Samuel 16:1); and though no one person is to be excluded from our prayers on the account of the decree of reprobation, since no man can certainly be known to be a reprobate; yet it does not become us to pray for the conversion and salvation of reprobates in general, since this would be contrary to the decree of God: and such purposes which God has declared by prophecy he has purposed in himself, as the conversion of the Jews, the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, the destruction of antichrist, and the glory of the Gospel church, for these we should pray that God would hasten them in his own time, and we are sure of being heard; but the revealed will of God is here intended, by which it appears that all grace is laid up in Christ, and all spiritual blessings are with him, and that the covenant of grace is ordered in all things, and full of the sure mercies of David, and of exceeding great and precious promises; all which are treasured up for the benefit and use of the people of God; and if, therefore, they ask for any grace, or supply of grace, for any spiritual blessing or mercy laid up in Christ, in the covenant, or in any of the promises, they ask that for matter which is according to the will of God, and which they may be assured they shall have, sooner or later: and to ask in a manner agreeably to his will, is to come in the name of Christ, and make mention of his righteousness, and ask for his sake; to put up all petitions in faith, with fervency, in sincerity, and uprightness; with reverence, humility, and submission to the divine will, and with importunity; and such askers God hears, even so as to answer, and grant their requests in his own time, though not always in theirs; in some cases sooner, in others later, according to his infinite wisdom, and in his own way, which is always the best, though not in theirs, as in the case of the Apostle Paul, (<sup><A121P></sup>2 Corinthians 12:7-9). The Alexandrian copy and the Ethiopic version read, “if we ask anything according to”, or in his name: that is, of Christ, and which agrees with (<sup><B143></sup>John 14:13,14) (<sup><B123></sup>John 16:23,24).

**Ver. 15.** *And if we know that he hear us,* &c.] As it may be assured he does hear and answer all such persons that ask according to his will:

*whatsoever we ask, we know,* or are assured,

*that we have the petitions that we desired of him:* for as it is the nature of that holy confidence, which believers have in God, to believe whatever they ask according to his will, in general, shall be grappled, so every request in particular; yea, before the mercy desired, or the favour asked for is

conferred, they are as sure of having it in God's own time and way, as if they now had it in hand and fact.

**Ver. 16.** *If anyone see his brother sin, &c.*] Those who have such an interest at the throne of grace, and such boldness and freedom there, should make use of it for others, as well as themselves, and particularly for fallen believers; for a “brother”; not in a natural or civil sense, but in a spiritual sense, one that is judged to be born again, and belongs to the family and household of God, and is a member of a Gospel church; and so is under the watch, inspection, and care of the saints; and is observed to sin, as the best of men are not without it, nor the commission of it, in thought, word, or deed: and this sin of his is

*a sin [which is] not unto death;* every sin, even the least sin, is in its own nature mortal, or deserving of death; the proper wages of sin is death, yea, death eternal; yet none of the sins of God's elect are unto death, or issue in death, in fact; which is owing not to any different nature there is in their sins, or to their good works which counterbalance them; but to the grace of God, and to the blood and righteousness of Christ, by which they are pardoned and justified, and freed from obligation to punishment, or eternal death, the just demerits of them: but how should another man know that a brother's sin is not unto death, when it is of the same nature and kind with another man's? it is known by this, that he does not continue in it; he does not live in the constant commission of it; his life is not a course of iniquity; that sin he sins is not a governing one in him; though he falls into it, he rises up out of it through divine grace, and abides not in it; and he has a sense of it, and is sorry for it, after a godly sort, loaths it, and himself for it; is ashamed of it, ingenuously confesses it, and mourns over it and forsakes it: now when any strong believer or spiritual man sees or knows that a brother has sinned, and this is his case,

*he shall ask;* he shall pray to God for him, that he would administer comfort to him, discover his love, and apply his pardoning grace to him, and indulge him with his presence and the light of his countenance:

*and he shall give him life;* that is, God shall give the sinning brother life; by which may be meant comfort, that which will revive his drooping spirits, and cause him to live cheerfully and comfortably, that so he may not be swallowed up with over much sorrow; or he shall grant a discovery of the pardon of his sin unto him, which will be as life from the dead, and will

give him a comfortable hope of eternal life, of his right unto it, and meetness for it:

*for them*, or “to them”

*that sin not unto death*, as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it; for this phrase is only descriptive of the persons to whom life is given by God, upon the prayers of saints for them, and not that this life is given to him that prays, and by him to be given to the sinning person. The Vulgate Latin version renders the whole thus, “and life shall be given to him that sins not unto death”; which leaves the words without any difficulty: the Ethiopic version indeed renders it, “and he that prays shall quicken him that sins [a sin] not unto death”; and this sense some interpreters incline to, and would have with this text compared (<sup>5046</sup>1 Timothy 4:16 <sup>5050</sup>James 5:20).

*There is a sin unto death*; which is not only deserving of death, as every other sin is, but which certainly and inevitably issues in death in all that commit it, without exception; and that is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is neither forgiven in this world nor in that to come, and therefore must be unto death; it is a sinning wilfully, not in a practical, but doctrinal way, after a man has received the knowledge of the truth; it is a wilful denial of the truth of the Gospel, particularly that peace, pardon, righteousness, eternal life, and salvation, are by Jesus Christ, contrary to the light of his mind, and this joined with malice and obstinacy; so that there is no more or other sacrifice for such a sin; there is nothing but a fearful looking for of wrath and fury to fall on such opposers of the way of life; and as the presumptuous sinners under Moses's law died without mercy, so must these despiteful ones under the Gospel; (see <sup>4023</sup>Matthew 12:31,32 <sup>5805</sup>Hebrews 10:26-29). Some think there is an allusion to one of the kinds of excommunication among the Jews, called “shammatha”, the etymology of which, according to some Jewish writers, is *htym μν*, “there is death” <sup>f65</sup>.

*I do not say that he shall pray for it*; the apostle does not expressly forbid to pray for the forgiveness of this sin, yet what he says amounts unto it; he gives no encouragement to it, or any hopes of succeeding, but rather the reverse; and indeed where this sin is known, or can be known, it is not to be prayed for, because it is irremissible; but as it is a most difficult point to know when a man has sinned it, the apostle expresses himself with great caution.

**Ver. 17.** *All unrighteousness is sin, &c.*] All unrighteousness against God or man is a sin against the law of God, and the wrath of God is revealed against it, and it is deserving of death; yet all unrighteousness is not unto death, as the sins of David, which were unrighteousness both to God and man, and yet they were put away, and he died not; Peter sinned very foully, and did great injustice to his dear Lord, and yet his sin was not unto death; he had repentance unto life given him, and a fresh application of pardoning grace:

*and there is a sin not unto death*; this is added for the relief of weak believers, who hearing of a sin unto death, not to be prayed for, might fear that theirs were of that kind, whereas none of them are; for though they are guilty of many unrighteousnesses, yet God is merciful to them and forgives, (~~“*SRD*”~~ Hebrews 8:12), and so they are not unto death.

**Ver. 18.** *We know that whosoever is born of God, &c.*] Who is regenerated by his Spirit and grace, and quickened by his power; who has Christ formed in him, and is made a partaker of the divine nature, and has every grace implanted in him:

*sinneth not*; the sin unto death; nor does he live in sin, or is under the power and dominion of it, though he does not live without it; (see Gill on ~~“*SRD*”~~ 1 John 3:9”);

*but he that is begotten of God*; the Vulgate Latin version reads, “the generation of God keeps or preserves him”; that is, that which is born in him, the new man, the principle of grace, or seed of God in him, keeps him from notorious crimes, particularly from sinning the sin unto death, and from the governing power of all other sins; but all other versions, as well as copies, read as we do, and as follows:

*keepeth himself*; not that any man can keep himself by his own power and strength; otherwise what mean the petitions of the saints to God that he would keep them, and even of Christ himself to God for them on the same account? God only is the keeper of his people, and they are only kept in safety whom he keeps, and it is by his power they are kept; but the sense is, that a believer defends himself by taking to him the whole armour of God, and especially the shield of faith, against the corruptions of his own heart, the snares of the world, and particularly the temptations of Satan:

*and that wicked one toucheth him not*; he cannot come at him so as to wound him to the heart, or destroy that principle of life that is in him, or so

as to overcome and devour him; he may tempt him, and sift him, and buffet him, and greatly afflict and grieve him, but he can not touch his life, or hurt him with the second death; nay, sometimes the believer is so enabled to wield the shield of faith, or to hold up Christ the shield by faith, and turn it every way in such a manner, that Satan, who is here meant by the wicked one, because he is notoriously so, cannot come near him, nor in with him; cannot work upon him at all with his temptations, nor in the least hurt his peace, joy, and comfort: the saints know their perseverance from the promises of God and declarations of Christ; (<sup><4951></sup>Psalm 125:1,2) (<sup><2434></sup>Jeremiah 32:40 <sup><4168></sup>Matthew 16:18 <sup><3108></sup>John 10:28).

**Ver. 19.** [*And we know that we are of God*, &c.] The sons of God, and regenerated by him; this is known by the Spirit of God, which witnesses to the spirits of the saints that they are the children of God; and by the fruits and effects of regenerating grace, as love to the brethren, and the like:

*and the whole world lies in wickedness*; that is, the men of the world, the greater part of the inhabitants of it, who are as they were when they came into it, not being born of God; these are addicted to sin and, wickedness; the bias of their minds is to it, they are set upon it, and give themselves up to it, are immersed in it, and are under the power of it: or “in the wicked one”; Satan, the god of this world; they are under his influence, and led according to his will, and they are governed by him, and are at his beck and command; and this is known, by sad experience, it is easy of observation;

“And cannot comprehend the things that are promised to the righteous in time to come: for this world is full of unrighteousness and infirmities.” (2 Esdras 4:27)

**Ver. 20.** *And we know that the Son of God is come*, &c.] That the second Person in the Godhead, who is equal to the Father, and of the same nature with him, is come from the Father, from heaven into this world, not by local motion, but by assumption of nature; that he is come in the flesh, or is become incarnate, in order to work out salvation for his people, by his obedience, sufferings, and death; and this John and others knew, for they had personal knowledge of him, and converse with him; they saw him with their eyes, heard him, and handled him: he dwelt among them, preached to them, wrought miracles before them, which proved him to be what he was; and it may be known that the Messiah must become, since Daniel's weeks, which fixes the time of his coming, are long ago up; the sceptre is departed from Judah, and the second temple is destroyed, neither of which were to

be till the Messiah came; and that Jesus of Nazareth is he who is come may be known by the characters of him, and the works done by him:

*and hath given us an understanding*; not a new faculty of the understanding but new light into it; a knowledge of spiritual things of himself, and of God in him, and of the truths of the Gospel, and of all divine and heavenly things; for he, the Son of God, is come a light into the world, and gives spiritual light to men:

*that we may know him that is true*; or “the true God”, as the Alexandrian copy and some others, and the Vulgate Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read; that is, God the Father, who is the true God, in opposition to the false gods of the Heathens, though not to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit; and the spiritual knowledge of him as the Father of Christ, and as a covenant God and Father in him, is only given to men by Christ, and this is life eternal; (see <sup><0127></sup>Matthew 11:27 <sup><0173></sup>John 17:3);

*and we are in him that is true, [even] in his Son Jesus Christ*; the words “Jesus Christ” are left out in the Alexandrian copy, and in the Vulgate Latin version; however, certain it is, that Jesus Christ is meant by his Son, who is the Son of the true and living God, and is himself “true”; not only true God, as hereafter asserted, but true man, having a true body and a reasonable soul, and was true and faithful in the discharge of his offices, as prophet, priest, and King; he faithfully declared the whole will of God, and taught the way of God in truth; he was faithful to him that appointed him, by securing his glory when he made reconciliation for the sins of the people; and all the administrations of his kingly office are just and true; yea, he is truth itself, the substance of all the types, in whom all the promises are yea and amen, and who has all the truths of the Gospel and treasures of wisdom in him; now his people are in him; they were secretly in him before the world was, being loved by him, chosen in him, put into his hands, preserved in him, and represented by him; and openly, at conversion, when they are anew created in him, brought to believe in him, and live upon him, and he lives in them, and they are in him as branches in the vine; and this is known by his Spirit being given them, by the communication of his grace unto them, and by the communion they have with him.

*This is the true God and eternal life*; that is, the Son of God, who is the immediate antecedent to the relative “this”; he is the true God, with his Father and the Spirit, in distinction from all false, fictitious, or nominal deities; and such as are only by office, or in an improper and figurative

sense: Christ is truly and really God, as appears from all the perfections of deity, the fulness of the Godhead being in him; from the divine works of creation and providence being ascribed to him; and from the divine worship that is given him; as well as from the names and titles he goes by, and particularly that of Jehovah, which is incommunicable to a creature; and he is called “eternal life”, because it is in him; and he is the giver of it to his people; and that itself will chiefly consist in the enjoyment and vision of him, and in conformity to him.

**Ver. 21.** *Little children, keep yourselves from idols, Amen.*] From Heathen idols and idolatry, into which the saints in those times might be liable to be drawn, by reason of their dwelling among Heathen idolaters, and being related to them, and by the too great freedom used in eating things sacrificed to idols in their temples; and from all other idols that might be introduced by some who went by the name of Christians, as the Gnostics, who worshipped the images of Simon and Helena; and the passage may be an antidote against the worshipping of images, afterwards introduced by the Papists. Moreover, errors and false doctrines, which are the figments of men's minds, and what they are fond of, may be called idols, and should be guarded against, and abstained from; as also the lusts of men's hearts, and all the evil things that are in the world, which are adored by the men of it; and even every creature that is loved too much is an idol; hence covetousness is called idolatry; nor should any creature or thing be loved more than God or Christ: the one only living and true God, Father, Son, and Spirit, he is only to be worshipped, feared, and loved.

# FOOTNOTES

- Ft1** -- Eccl. Hist. 50:3. c. 24.
- Ft2** -- Augustin. apud Grotium.
- Ft3** -- Hor. Hebr. in ~~4014~~1 Corinthians 1:14.
- Ft4** -- Stromat. 50:2. p. 389.
- Ft5** -- Lex. Cabalist, p. 63, 64.
- Ft6** -- Sepher Cosri, par. 2. sect. 2. fol. 61. 2.
- Ft7** -- Misn. Shebuot, c. 1. sect. 6.
- Ft8** -- Vid. T. Bab. Temura, fol. 15. 2. & Bava Kama, fol. 80. 1. T. Hieros. Sota, fol. 24. 1. & Chagiga, fol. 77. 4.
- Ft9** -- Pirke Abot, c. 4. sect. 11. T. Bab. Sabbat, fol. 32. 1. T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 10. 1.
- Ft10** -- De vita Mosis, 50:3:p. 673.
- Ft11** -- Jarchi in ~~2515~~Isaiah 53:5.
- Ft12** -- T. Hieros. Nazir, fol. 57. 3. Vid. T. Bab. Succa, fol. 55. 2.
- Ft13** -- T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 71. 2.
- Ft14** -- T. Bab. Bava Metzia, fol. 33. 2.
- Ft15** -- T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 22. 2.
- Ft16** -- T. Bab. Horayot, fol. 13. 2.
- Ft17** -- Piske Toseph. Megilla, art. 104.
- Ft18** -- T. Bab. Cetubot, fol. 90. 2. & Kiddushin, fol. 47. 2. & 49. 1. & 65. 2. & Gittin, fol. 8. 1. & 60. 2.
- Ft19** -- T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 48. 1.
- Ft20** -- Maimon. Hilch. Tephilla, c. 11. sect. 16.
- Ft21** -- Zohar in Leviticus fol. 29. 1.

- Ft22 -- Ib. fol. 24. 1. T. Hieros. Yoma, fol. 38. 2.
- Ft23 -- T. Bab. Zebachim, fol. 88. 2. & Erachin, fol. 16. 1.
- Ft24 -- T. Bab. Zebachim, ib. T. Hieros. Yoma, fol. 44. 2.
- Ft25 -- T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 87. 1. & T. Hieros. Yoma, fol. 45. 2, 3.
- Ft26 -- Seder Tephillot, fol. 41. 1. Ed. Amsterd.
- Ft27 -- Yalkut Simconi, par. 2. fol. 461.
- Ft28 -- Moses Kotsensis Mitzvot Tora, pr. neg. 5.
- Ft29 -- Yalkut Simconi, par. 2. fol. 44. 4.
- Ft30 -- T. Hieros. Bicurim, fol. 65. 4.
- Ft31 -- Kimchi in Psal. 49:9. Ben Melech in ib. ver. 14.
- Ft32 -- T. Hieros. Horayot, fol. 47. 3.
- Ft33 -- Cabala Denudata, par. 2. p. 8.
- Ft34 -- De praemiis. & Paenis, p. 917.
- Ft35 -- Sepher Tikkunim, fol. 112. 1. apud Rittangel, de ver. Rel. Christ, p. 68.
- Ft36 -- Raya Mehimna in Zohar in Leviticus fol. 34. 2.
- Ft37 -- Midrash Ruth in Zohar in Genesis fol. 42. 4.
- Ft38 -- Zohar in ib. fol. 43. 1.
- Ft39 -- Ib. fol. 41. 1, 2.
- Ft40 -- Targum Jon. in <sup>-0048</sup>Genesis 4:8. Pirke Eliezer, c. 21.
- Ft41 -- Targum Hieros. & Jon. in <sup>-0048</sup>Genesis 4:8.
- Ft42 -- Quod Det. Potior. p. 161.
- Ft43 -- Shirhashirim Rabba, fol. 15. 1. & Lex. Cabal. p. 43, 44.
- Ft44 -- Misn. Negaim, c. 2. sect. 1. Maimon. & Bartenora in ib. Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 2. sect. 1. & Jarchi & Bartenora in ib. vid. T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 23. 1. & Succa, fol. 20. 1.

- Ft45** -- Zohar in Exodus fol. 87. 1.
- Ft46** -- Respons. contr. Arian. obj. 10. & de Trinitate, c. 4.
- Ft47** -- Contr. Arium, p. 109.
- Ft48** -- De Unitate Ecclesiastes p. 255. & in Ep. 73. ad Jubajan, p. 184.
- Ft49** -- Contr. Praxeam, c. 25.
- Ft50** -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 1. 3.
- Ft51** -- Ib. in Leviticus fol. 27. 2.
- Ft52** -- Ib. in Exodus fol. 18. 3, 4.
- Ft53** -- Ib. in Numbers fol. 67. 3.
- Ft54** -- Ib. in Exodus fol. 73. 4.
- Ft55** -- Ib. in Leviticus fol. 29. 2.
- Ft56** -- Sepher Jetzira, Semit. 1.
- Ft57** -- Sepher Jetzira, Semit. 2.
- Ft58** -- Ib. Semit. 3.
- Ft59** -- R. Menachem apud Rittangel. in Jetzira, p. 193.
- Ft60** -- Tikkune Zohar apud ib. p. 64.
- Ft61** -- Apud ib. p. 38.
- Ft62** -- Zohar in Genesis fol. 48. 4. Jarchi in ~~Genesis~~ Genesis 19:24. Vid. T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 6. 1. & Gloss. in ib. & Sanhedrin, fol. 3. 2.
- Ft63** -- R. Abraham Seba in Tzeror Hammor, fol. 113. 2.
- Ft64** -- T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 164. 2.
- Ft65** -- T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 17. 1.