

1 John 4

Some Points from 1 John 3

- **Love** – God’s love is out of this world.
- **Children** – we are God’s children.
- **World** – the world doesn’t recognize us as God’s children because it doesn’t recognize God as Father.
- **Revealed** – we have some glimpses of what we will be, but it has not been revealed to us.
- **Pure** – we have been made pure through Jesus, but we must continually purify ourselves.
- **Career** – make righteousness our habit; not sin.
- **Astray** – don’t be led astray. Practice righteousness. To practice sin is to be a child of the devil. “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.”
- **Destroy** – Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.
- **Seed** – the seed is the word of God; remain in it.
- **Love** – must practice it to have fellowship with God.

1 John 4:1-6

- **1** Beloved, don’t believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. **2** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, **3** and every spirit who doesn’t confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the Antichrist, of whom you have heard that it comes. Now it is in the world already. **4** You are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. **5** They are of the world. Therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them. **6** We are of God. He who knows God listens to us. He who is not of God doesn’t listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

Notes – Verses 1-6

● Rejection Of False Doctrine

- An apt description of 1 John 4:1-6
- Continuing fellowship with God (and one another) is rooted in remaining in the apostles' teaching.
- 1 John 2:24 - Therefore, as for you, let that remain in you which you heard from the beginning. If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son, and in the Father.

● 1 Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

- beloved (*agapētos*) – John will still use “little children” but here he wants to assure them that they are loved as he begins this admonition about false doctrines.
- spirit (*pneuma*) – literally wind, or breath. John is not warning of something unseen, but of real men (false prophets) who would mislead them.
- spirit (*pneuma*) – when used in combination *Hagios Pneuma*, it is always translated as Holy Spirit. *Pneuma* by itself depends upon context.
- It may be a crude simplification to translate “don't believe everything that breathes”. Better - “don't believe everyone who would instruct God's people.” Examine them to prove whether they are genuine or not.
- test (*dokimazō*) – try, test, examine, prove. The same word is used for testing precious metals to determine that they are genuine.
- Three tests (valid then and now):
 - 4:1 - of God
 - 4:2 - confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh
 - 4:6 – listens to testimony of apostles
- of God (*ek theos*) – *ek* – proceeding from, originating from. *theos* – God.
- Used six times in 4:1-6.
- many (*polus*) – much, plenty, many.

- false prophets (*pseudoprophētēs*) – imposters.
- Hence, the need for testing.

Test the spirits	
DO THEY CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH?	4:2-3
DO THEY LISTEN TO THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST?	4:6
Other tests not explicitly stated by John	
When a prophet speaks in the LORD's name, if the thing doesn't follow, nor happen, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken.	Deut. 18:21-22
If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you, and he gives you a sign or ...	Deut. 13:1-4

- 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit who doesn't confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the Antichrist, of whom you have heard that it comes. Now it is in the world already.

— At this point in our study, the heresy of Gnosticism has been pointed out several times.

Gnosticism	The practical effect of the Gnostic philosophy was to separate all spirit from all matter. Spirit good; matter evil. So deity (Jesus) could not become flesh.
Docetism	Denied the humanity of Jesus, saying that His appearance was a phantom. He was not human, did not die, did not rise from the dead.
Cerentianism	Denied the deity of Jesus. They could not reconcile the things that happened to Him with their idea of the Son of God.
Nicolaitans	Taught that the unbridled indulgence of human desires, the sins of the flesh, were not in any sense sins of the soul. (See Rev. 2:15)
Ascetism	Taught that flesh is evil and so should be tormented and deprived of all comforts. Later developed into Monasticism.

- There are more than a few well-known schools of theology in the USA in which the virgin birth is considered a myth.
- **If Jesus was born of man, he is not the son of God, and the scriptures lie.**
- **If he is not the son of God, he has no authority.**
- **If he did not live in the flesh, he could not die in the flesh.**
- **If he did not die in the flesh, he could not have risen from the grave.**
 - **More than 500 witnesses are false.**
- **If he is not risen, then no one has hope of eternal life.**

- With such theological philosophy being taught today, many are dissuaded from knowing the truth of God’s word. The problem was not limited to the 1st-2nd centuries; it still exists!
- 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them. 6 We are of God. He who knows God listens to us. He who is not of God doesn’t listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.
- There is a progression in these 3 verses:
 - **You** – the readers (4)
 - **They** – the false teachers (5)
 - **We** – the apostles (6).
- of God (*ek theos*) – in 4:1, the understanding is that the message proceeds from God. In this personal sense, it may be better understood as “born of God” as in 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; or even “belonging to God” or “children of God”.
- overcome (*nikaō*) - to subdue, conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory.
 - 1 John 2:19 - They went out from us, but they didn’t belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have continued with us. But they left, that they might be revealed that none of them belong to us.
- The encouraging thing is they can, they have, and we can overcome them.
- because God is greater than Satan!
- 2 Kings 6:16 - He answered, “Don’t be afraid; for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”
- If no one listens, they will seek another audience.
- James 4:7 - Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
- When the teaching of someone has been evaluated, as in 4:1, and determined to be that which does not proceed from God, how should we react?

- Argue? Correct? Refuse to listen?
- 1 John 5:4-5 - **4** For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: your faith. **5** Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
- 1 John 3:24 - He who keeps his commandments remains in him, and he in him. By this we know that he remains in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.
- **5 They** are of the world. Therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them.
 - **They** – the false teachers.
 - of the world (*ek kosmos*) – originate in, proceed from the world.
 - Eph. 2:2 - in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience;
 - **5** They are from the world and therefore speak from the **viewpoint of the world**, and the world listens to them. (NIV 84)
 - Col. 2:8 - Be careful that you don't let anyone rob you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ.
 - Do people tend to listen to those of their own viewpoint? To the exclusion of other viewpoints?
 - Don't be surprised by the seeming success of them, because their message is appealing to the world.
- **6 We** are of God. He who knows God listens to us. He who is not of God doesn't listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.
 - **We** – John and the apostles.
 - In most of 1 John, "We" is used collectively of the members of the body. In the context of 4:6, since John was an eye-witness along with the other apostles, I think John is speaking collectively of the apostles.
 - John 13:20 - Most certainly I tell you, he who receives whomever I send, receives me; and he who receives me, receives him who sent me."

- Acts 1:8b - ... You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.”
- of God (*ek theos*) – the apostles were sent by God’s son, which should be sufficient to understand that they proceeded from God.
- 1 John 5:19 - We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (*John is probably referring collectively to all members of the body in 5:19*).

1 John 4:7-21

- 7 Beloved, let’s love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God. 8 He who doesn’t love doesn’t know God, for God is love. 9 By this God’s love was revealed in us, that God has sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we remain in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him, and he in God. 16 We know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. 17 In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, even so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment. He who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love him, because he first loved us. 20 If a man says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn’t love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 This commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should also love his brother.

Notes – Verses 7-21

- **Rooted in God’s Love – Perfected in Practice**
 - Those loved (beloved) are to love one another.
- 7 Beloved, let’s love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves has

been born of God, and knows God.

- Beloved (*agapētos*) – same term that John used to begin this chapter.
- 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another.
- of God (*ek theos*) – *ek* - proceeding from, originating from. *theos* – God
- 1 Thess. 4:9 – But concerning brotherly love, you have no need that one write to you. For you yourselves are taught by God to love one another,
- 1 Peter 1:22 – Seeing you have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth through the Spirit in sincere brotherly affection, love one another from the heart fervently:
- born of God (*gennaō ek theos*) -
- knows God (*ginōskō theos*) –
 - John 14:8-10 - 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you such a long time, and do you not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How do you say, ‘Show us the Father?’
- 8 He who doesn’t love doesn’t know God, for God is love.
 - For some people the simple declaration of a truth does not always declare the evident error of whatever is its opposite. So John clearly states both sides for his readers. He states the positive: “he who loves knows God.” Then he reinforces that truth with the negative: “he that loves not knows not God.”
- 9 By this God’s love was revealed in us, that God has sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.
 - revealed (*phaneroō*) – manifested, made known.
 - in us (*en hēmin*) –
 - This is how God showed his love **among** us: (NIV)
 - In this the love of God was manifested toward us, (NKJV)
 - ASV may have a marginal reading of “in our case”, meaning “on our behalf”.
- 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son as

the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

- Eph. 1:4 - even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without defect before him in love;
- Divine “love” initiated the total process of redemption even before the “creation of the world”.
- 11 Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another.
 - The “if” condition IS true, resulting in our obligation to love one another.
- 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love has been perfected in us.
 - John 1:18 - No one has seen God at any time. The one and only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.
 - John 14:7 - If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you know him, and have seen him.”
 - remains (*menō*) – abides, lives, dwells
 - perfected (*teleioō*) – completed, accomplished
 - Though we have never seen God (except in Jesus) His love for us has been shown through His son.
 - 1 John 4:12b - but if we love one another, God **lives in us** and his love is made complete in us. (NIV)
- 13 By this we know that we remain in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.
 - The indwelling “gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38-39; 5:32) assures us of what God has promised:
 - 2 Cor. 6:16 - What agreement has a temple of God with idols? For you are a temple of the living God. Even as God said, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”
 - The church is the dwelling place of deity; it is the “dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). Thus the church is the “temple of the Holy Spirit”.
 - 1Cor. 3:16 - Don’t you know that you are a temple of God, and that God’s Spirit lives in you?

- 1 John 3:24 - He who keeps his commandments remains in him, and he in him. By this we know that he remains in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.
- In 13-16, the indwelling God is mentioned three times, and the reciprocal nature of it (he in us, we in him) is stressed each time.
 - 4:13 – we remain in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit
 - 4:15 – confesses that Jesus is the son of God, God remains in him, and he in God.
 - 4:16 – he who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.
- 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world.
 - We – the apostles. Remember 1 John 1:1-3.
 - testify (*martureō*) - to be a witness, charge, give [evidence], bear record, testify, give (have) testimony.
 - Acts 1:8b - you will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.”
- 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him, and he in God.
 - John leaves no room for gnostic thinking about Jesus.
- 16 We know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.
 - Remains (abides) in love is equated to “remains (abides) in God.”
 - There is no distinction between those and a dozen other similar expressions in the word of God.
 - Christians are in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and in love (in the sense of remaining in love); and at the same time the New Testament reveals that each of these: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and love all abide, indwell, or reside in Christians.
 - Similar expressions are to be seen in:
 - Philippians 2:5 – In your relationships with one another, have **the same mindset** as Christ Jesus:

- Colossians 3:16 – Let **the word of Christ dwell** in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord.
- **17** In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, even so are we in this world.
 - In this – remaining in love, remaining in God, v-v.
 - perfect (*teleioō*) - complete, finished, fulfilled.
 - The same sacrificial love which put Jesus on the cross is reflected in us.
 - boldness (*parrhēsia*) – assurance, confidence; *literally* - *freedom of speech*.
 - as he is –
 - 1 John 4:7 - ... for love is of God ...
 - 1 John 4:16 - ... God is love, ...
 - John 13:35 - By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
- **18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment. He who fears is not made perfect in love.
 - fear (*phobos*) – alarm, fright, terror.
 - punishment (*kolasis*) – penalty, torment.
 - The following list gives some of the reasons John has already given for us to have no fear:
- Confidence Instead of Fear
 - 1 John 1:7 - But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.
 - 1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - 1 John 2:1 - If anyone sins, we have a Counselor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

- 1 John 2:5a - But whoever keeps his word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in him. ...
- 1 John 2:28 - Now, little children, remain in him, that when he appears, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.
- 1 John 3:1a - See how great a love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God! ...
- 1 John 3:2 - Beloved, now we are children of God, and it is not yet revealed what we will be. But we know that when he is revealed, we will be like him; for we will see him just as he is.
- 1 John 3:24 - He who keeps his commandments remains in him, and he in him. By this we know that he remains in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.
- 1 John 4:4b - ... greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.
- 19 We love him, because he first loved us.
 - The "love" John discusses is not natural to man. It is divine in origin, in motivation, and in essential attributes. It possesses qualities that are derived only from the imitation of God's self-emptying devotion toward the undeserving.
 - 1 John 3:1a - See how great a love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God!
- 20 If a man says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?
 - 1 John 4:12a - No one has seen God at any time.
 - John may have been leading to the thought of 4:20.
 - John begin in chapter 1 to write of saying but not doing.
 - Three "black lies" of 1 John are listed next.

- **Three Lies of “If we say” in 1 John**

- 1 John 1:6 - If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and don't tell the truth.
- 1 John 2:4 - One who says, “I know him,” and doesn't keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth isn't in him.
- 1 John 4:20 - If a man says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?
- Remember that love is action.
- We may not always have warm feelings about our brother, but the love of God compels us to act in their best interest.
- Another problem: you may want to tell me what is in my best interest, but I may not want to hear it. Be very tactful!

- **21** This commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should also love his brother.

- 1 John 1:5b - Whoever loves the Father also loves the child who is born of him.
- Remember the greatest commands:
 - Matt. 22:37-39 - Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 A second likewise is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

1 John 4 - Review Questions

- What are two contrasting things of which John warns us (4:1-3)?
- How can we determine whether a teacher is truthful today (4:2-3, 6)?
- What determines our relationship with God (4:7-ff)?
- Can you list four important things John wrote concerning love (4:7-21)?
- What are two results of loving our brother (4:17-18)?