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POCKET
Commentary
ON
FIRST
John

OUTLINED CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

by WALTER L. WILSON, M. D.

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on
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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In this lovely little epistle, there are no references to the Old Testament. This is quite unusual, for most of the New Testament books explain Old Testament truths. Perhaps the reason for this lack of reference is that John is emphasizing some things in the Christian's life which were not emphasized so much by the prophets of old.

The principal *words* in this epistle will reveal the principal *thoughts*. We shall find as we consider this truth that God is giving a prescription for a healthy soul and a fruitful life.

In the first epistle of John love is mentioned thirty-two times—sometimes it is God's love for us, sometimes our love for Him, and at other times it is our love for each other. We are also told what we should not love. Thirty times we read about "knowing." We are to know God, and to know the world, Satan, self and God's truth. There are nine references to that which is "from the beginning." John wants us to know that he is familiar with past history of the matters concerning which he is writing. Eternal life is mentioned six times, for this is an essential and basic truth for the Christian life.

God is revealed in five different aspects in this

short epistle. He is presented to us as light, love, life, truth and righteousness. Those who are "of God" will reveal in their lives some of these five wonderful attributes because the saved person has the life of Christ Jesus in him.

First John was written so that we might understand that we are safe, and may be sure of it. It was written that we might be holy, and that we might be happy while we are holy. God does not want holy people to be sad. This book was written so that we should not have a sick soul in a healthy body. We are not to be fixing up the vessel constantly, and forgetting the treasure that is in the vessel. We are not to be so occupied with fixing the house that we forget the health and the happiness of the tenant in the house.

Lessons

The lessons found in this book will reveal *where* we are as to our place, and *how* we are as to our condition. It will reveal what we are religiously, and what we are spiritually. These chapters will tell us how to know God's truth, and then how to live in God's way. Here we will find how to love and what to love. The Lord wants us to know how to pray, as well as how to discern God's interests. Here we will find what we should be, and where we should be.

Seven times John speaks of "what we say." God takes notice of our words and statements, as He reveals in Matthew 12:37. God refers in these pages to the beginning of the devil's history, the

Christian experience, Christ's earthly life, and Christ's ministry.

John appeals to many of our senses in this little book. He speaks of that which he has heard, and seen, and looked upon, and handled, and believed, and experienced. Almost every attitude of the human life is represented in our relationship to Christ Jesus.

John gives several reasons for writing this little book. These are found in chapter 1, verse 4, *that our joy may be full*; chapter 2, verse 1, *that we may live a godly life*; chapter 2, verse 12, *that we may learn about God's forgiveness*; chapter 2, verse 13, *that we may have a personal acquaintance with Christ, and also know the Father*. Then again He wants us to have *an even more intimate knowledge of God* in chapter 2, verse 14, and thereby be made strong Christians (in the same verse). *He wants us to be acquainted with those who would turn us astray* in chapter 2, verse 26. Then in chapter 5, verse 13, *he wants us to be assured that we have eternal life*. God grant that we may know all of these blessings by reading and studying this little book.

In First John we find devotional truths for the heart, and doctrinal truths for the head. In these chapters we shall find that which inspires us and also that which instructs us. God is revealed in this little book as the One who provides for us and also protects us. John carefully unfolds the truths of God, and unveils the love of God throughout the epistle.

This is a book of fellowship. There are five ingredients found in this sweet experience. In chapter 1 it is fellowship with the Father and with the Son because of their wonderful presence. In chapter 2 our fellowship is based on forgiveness. In chapter 3 it is a result of faith. In chapter 4 it brings fealty to the living God. In chapter 5 it results in a close following on with God. The whole person is involved in a devotion to Christ which is most wonderful in character.

Love

Since there is much in this wonderful book about love, we should consider carefully what it says that we should love and should not love. Love is not a passing feeling, but is a deep, genuine affection of the heart that moves one to action. Love will pay any price for the object of that love. We find it expressed in John 3:16, and actually performed when the Lord Jesus came from heaven to a stable. Love loves to give so that when we read so frequently "love one another," it should mean that we give to each other liberally, gladly and freely of our best. It means that we will be self-sacrificing for others. It means that we lay down our lives for the brethren (chapter 3, verse 16). It does not mean that we will help our brethren if the weather is right, or the situation is propitious. It means that we will go to much trouble and some expense if necessary to bring comfort, joy and blessing to others who are in the family of God with us.

It was for this that Jesus prayed, and this same John records it in his Gospel in chapter 17. No wonder he speaks so much about it in the chapters of this book, his epistle. Churches would not split nor would congregations be divided if hearts responded to this call for loving one another. John is giving us in this little epistle a prescription for unity and union. He is telling us how to avoid the pitfalls of the devil and the attractions of the world. We do it by obeying the Lord's command that "Ye love one another."

Then John admonishes us clearly and definitely that we should not love the world. The world is attractive, but the world is an enemy of God. The world is full of beautiful things which, when held in the right place in the mind and heart of the Christian, are blessings. We rejoice in the flowers and their perfume. We admire the birds and their beautiful songs. We are amazed at the way animals live. We are attracted by the mountains and the valleys. It is not these things that John is talking about. He is talking about the people of this world whose desires are for the gratification of self, the promotion of power, and the gathering of glory. We are not to love those things, which the world uses to attract the people of the world. Our affections are to be set above where Christ sitteth. We are to love the world only as God loved the world so that the world may receive God's gift, Christ Jesus, and become true Christians.

Personal Knowledge of God

Another truth that is prominent throughout this book is the truth about knowing God personally. This does not mean that we know *about* Him, but rather that we know *Him* personally because of a personal meeting with Him and a personal association with Him. The ordinary man does not know God. He only knows about Him. We get to know God through Christ Jesus our Lord. He gives us this new eternal life which has a capacity to understand and know God (chapter 5, verse 20). God wants us to know Him intimately so that we may understand His ways and may fit our prayers into His will. Those who know God are never led astray into false doctrines. Those who know God understand God's way of salvation, God's plan of forgiveness, and God's program for living. We must know God if we are to walk with God. There is no other way to have fellowship with Him, except by knowing Him personally. How can we enter into His thoughts and plans unless we know His heart and His desires. We get to know Him through reading His Word, and through watching His dealings with others as recorded in the Scriptures. All through this epistle John assures us that it is possible for a man of the earth to know personally the God of Heaven. Let us each one seek to know Him so well that we shall understand His ways and His Word.

In First John we also find some profound truths. There are shallows in which all may wade, but there are depths in which few find the bottom. Here

we read about the anti-christ, with all of his deception and clever schemes to hinder the work of God. Here we read of the marvelous and effectual work of Christ as our Advocate. Christ is revealed to us as the Life-giver, and as the Son of God. Let us study these chapters with open hearts, hungry to know the God of Heaven. It will result in a fruitful and devotion-filled life.

CHAPTER ONE

Our attention is attracted to the fact that there is no prelude nor preface to John's message. There are no preliminaries. He arrives immediately at his subject and omits generalities.

We are impressed with John's love for Christ personally. The sweetness of that personal contact received while lying on Jesus' bosom is carried over into this epistle. He talks as one who really loved his Lord. He heard Him; he saw Him; he looked upon Him; he felt Him with his hands. Perhaps when Jesus was in the upper room, as recorded in Luke 24, John may have touched Him, as Jesus invited the disciples to do.

Twice John mentions seeing the Saviour in verse 1, and again twice in verse 2. He mentions seeing Him a fifth time in verse 3. Jeremiah said that the eye affects the heart (Lam. 3:51), and it certainly does. John is calling on us to gaze longingly and lovingly on our risen, living, wonderful Christ, so that our hearts also will be affected. You remember Jesus said, "This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life." The Greeks came and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

After His resurrection we read, "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him."

Hearing and Seeing Christ

Twice John speaks of hearing Christ (verses 1 and 3). The Saviour based eternal life on the hearing His Word. It is His Word that is quick and powerful. John also knew that when that voice was heard their joy would be full (verse 4). God is never interested in half-way measures. He does not want us to have just a little bit of joy once in a while. It is His desire that this should be our portion constantly. He wrote this book so we would have no questions about forgiveness, nor fellowship, but would follow the Saviour with the joy of the Lord filling our souls.

In verse 5, we find the effects of gazing upon the Lord Jesus, handling Him, and hearing His voice. We must tell it. We cannot keep still. We are to go home and tell what great things the Lord has done for us. The Lord told one man "go home and tell what great things the Lord hath done for thee." Mary hurried to the disciples to tell them she had seen and heard Him. Hosea tells us that the way to avoid idolatry is to see Him and to hear Him (Hosea 14:8).

John makes much of the fact that God is light. The reason is quite apparent, for all that is of the devil and sin leaves the soul in darkness, and results in the outer dark for the lost. God is calling His people to a path that is in the bright light of His presence and fellowship so that there will be nothing between the soul and the Saviour.

Verse 6 presents a statement or a confession which is seldom heard these days. Few today speak of having fellowship with God. Religious people talk about their church program. Those who are sectarian minded are occupied with the plans of their denomination. Those in false cults talk about the particular doctrines which are promoted by that particular group. Reference is seldom made (outside of truly evangelical circles) to walking with God in fellowship and sweet communion. Of course, those who walk in the dark know nothing about this communion.

Walking with God

In verse 7 the walk is brought before us as though God expects us to make some progress and to attain some goal. Walking indicates activity and purpose. Those who walk usually know where they are going, and why. They want to get somewhere. They are not content to remain inactive. This has God's commendation.

In verse 8 another confession is represented. There are some who say they have no sin, and in so doing make themselves equal with God. There are sins of omission and commission, sins of ignorance and of presumption, sins in the holy things, and sins which we cause others to commit. Since no help is found for the flesh in the Scriptures, that one who claims to be sinless is confessing that his flesh has no evil desires at all, and confesses that he knows he has done everything he should, and has kept every command as though he knew each one, and has not caused others to sin. No wonder the

Lord condemns any such statement. No one needs to make such a statement. Why should he? Let God say it if it is to be said.

In verse 9 we have the same proposition. The Lord is quite willing to listen to our story and to cleanse us by the precious blood. Let us not be afraid to tell Him the whole story.

In verse 10 we are reminded by the Word of God that all have sinned. God knows it and makes rich provision for it at Calvary.

CHAPTER TWO

The true shepherd of God's sheep will always be interested in their spiritual welfare, so John writes this wonderful little letter in order to help the saints to live above their sinful influences. Again his shepherd heart is seen in that he mentions the sweet provision God has made for those who do sin. The remedy is given at once by this man of God—the remedy is the man Christ Jesus. We must have a righteous advocate because of our unrighteousness. This Advocate is also the Mercy Seat, for the word propitiation really means "mercy seat." The words "we" and "our" refer to God's people, the Christians. Really, however, our Lord has provided what we might call a "blood bank," so that any who

desire to do so may take advantage of the wonderful provisions made at Calvary by the Saviour.

It is quite evident that John wanted us to have certain assurance of our salvation and of our true knowledge of God. Much is given in this chapter about this assurance. When our Lord gives us a new nature, then there is a love for His Word, and a desire to please Him, together with a love for the people of God.

The commandment referred to in verses 7 and 8 is the command regarding our relationship to others. Those who belong to Christ will love others who belong to that same Saviour, and this love is without effort. Those who hate God's people (verse 11) certainly reveal that they do not have the love of God in their souls. God loves all His people. He loves the disobedient as well as those who live godly lives. If we belong to the Lord and really know the Lord, then we too shall be glad to be in happy fellowship with all of God's dear people.

John would not trust to the word of mouth for his instructions, but writes to the little ones, the older ones, and the matured ones to remind them of the blessing God had brought into their lives. It is a consciousness of our position in Christ that preserves us from the corruption and pollution of this world.

Separation from the World

In verse 15 we are warned not to love the world. God loved the world, but He loved to give all the people of the world Christ. Others love the world to get all they can from the world. You will note

that John speaks of the love of the Father which is not in the one who loves the world. He does not speak of the love of God, because He is talking about a different matter entirely. The Father is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If anyone hates Christ, as this world certainly does, he cannot have in him the love that is in the Father of Christ. This reveals how utterly lost those are who deny the claims, and the place, and the work of the Son of God.

We should notice carefully the diagnosis which John makes of all that is in this world. He includes everything in society, in business and in religion. Read it carefully in verse 16. All that is in the world is evanescent and transient. Only that which is according to the will of God remains substantial.

Now the subject of the anti-christ is presented to us in verse 18. We should remember that there are three battles going on constantly in the world. God the Father is opposed to the world; God the Son is opposed to Satan; God the Spirit is opposed to the flesh. These three are in constant conflict. The subject here is the anti-christ aspect. Anything permitted in the life that opposes the Lord Jesus is an anti-christ. Every false religion is an anti-christ. Every teacher of false doctrines is an anti-christ. These separate themselves from orthodox, godly Christians because they do not belong with God's people.

The expression "of God" is an interesting one, for it means that we have in us the nature of God

because we have received Christ Jesus. Those who are not thus blessed are not of God, and not of us. Notice that this anti-christ spirit has several characteristics. The anti-christ denies that the man Jesus was the Christ of the Old Testament living in His prenatal glory with God in a past eternity. He denies that God is the Father of Christ, and the Father of believers, and therefore is a personal God. He denies the words and the claims of Christ as the Son of God. There are many anti-christs in the world today, but some day *the* anti-christ will come, who is called the man of sin.

The chapter ends with a plea for God's children to walk with God, live in His presence, and serve Him faithfully. Those who do so will not be ashamed to meet Him in that great day when He comes back again.

CHAPTER THREE

No wonder John asks us to "behold." He is about to reveal to us one of those stupendous truths that stagger our imagination. He is telling us plainly that the Father in Heaven deliberately, of His own free will and accord, placed His love on folks like us. No one would ever have dreamed that this could be so. The character of that love was such that it brought us into His very family, that we might be

called His children, and that eventually we might be conformed to His image. No human imagination would ever have conceived such a miracle. This is a present blessing as we find from verse 2, and the promise is there that some day we shall see Christ. You will notice that it says "that we should be called the sons of God." Who calls us that? God does, Christ does; the Holy Spirit does. Spiritually minded people do. They can see that those who are saved by grace are different from others. They purify themselves. They put away those things which would hinder them from being known as God's children and God's people.

Sin

Now in verse 4 we find the definition of sin. Probably the best rendering of the passage is—"Sin is lawlessness." In all probability, the sin mentioned throughout the rest of this chapter is that sin which Satan committed at the beginning. He rejected the Lordship of God, and decided that he himself would be great as God. In verse 8 the sin mentioned is directly connected with the devil. Now we know the devil did not steal nor get drunk, nor was he a riotous renegade. All he did was to reject the Lordship of God and decide that he would do what he pleased in spite of God.

If this supposition is true, and if this is the sin referred to in the passage, then these difficult verses are rather easily understood. In all my years of dealing with human hearts and lives, I have never known a true believer who had any desire at all

to deny or reject the Lordship of Jesus Christ, nor the Sovereignty of God the Father. Even though some sins are committed, the believer knows the sins are wrong, but does not deny that his Lord has a perfect right to be his Lord and to rule over him.

In verse 9 the same truth is revealed. We might read it — “whosoever is born of God doth not deny the lordship of his God.” Certainly we know that he does not. The sin that he cannot do is the sin of rejecting and refusing God as his Lord, Jesus Christ as his Master, the Holy Spirit as his Leader.

There are some who say that the word “cannot” does not occur in the Greek, and the passage should read, “he that is born of God can *not* sin.” Of course, we know that this is true. The lost man is always sinning. Everything that he does is wrong. The Christian, however, having the new nature, is not guilty of doing everything wrong as the sinner is. There are many things that the Christian does in which there is no sin. He has the power, through the indwelling Spirit, to be kept from sinning.

Covered Sin

There are also those who feel that this passage is not a revelation of our thoughts concerning ourselves, nor concerning others, but it reveals God’s thoughts about us. God’s estimate of us is found in Colossians 1:28 and Colossians 2:10. We find an example of it in Numbers 23:21. God puts

some strange words into the mouth of Balaam, and Balaam says as he looks down on the camp of Israel, "God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." Those who read their Bibles know that the nation of Israel was constantly sinning. They were constantly filled with iniquity. How then could God make such a statement? He was looking down at Israel through the cloud that ascended from the sacrificial offerings as they were burnt on the altar. Looking at Israel through the smoke, the fire and the blood of the animals, God saw nothing sinful nor wrong. So God looks down at us through Calvary, through the precious blood of Jesus. Because we are "under the blood," trusting in the risen, living, crucified Saviour, He sees us as sinless, holy and righteous.

Because we are in this position as God's children, we are warned that the world will treat us as they treated our Master. The world will hate us, but we should not hate one another. If the love of God led Christ to die for us, we too should be willing to make any sacrifice for God's dear children (I John 3:16). Let us love one another in a liberal way, and give from the fullness of our hearts.

CHAPTER 4

The loving heart of the Apostle John just had to relieve itself in those precious words with which he opens this chapter. He wants his children to have a clear vision and to know exactly what is of God and what is not. He is writing to those who evidently were saved out of idolatry and would not therefore know how to judge speakers and their messages. We should notice that John identifies a message by its relationship to the risen, living Man, Christ Jesus our Lord. That one who confesses that the Man Jesus was the Christ of the Old Testament who was promised and foretold is a man whom God owns and who has the evidences that he has been saved by grace.

We are faced in verse 3 with a startling statement, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." We observe that this person does not say that "Jesus Christ did not come." He just simply ignores the coming of Christ entirely, and says nothing about Jesus as the Christ or the Son of God. His silence on the subject proves that he does not belong to the Lord, nor does God own him as His child. This person may preach wonderful sermons about many subjects, but when he omits statements about

the man Christ Jesus, he proves that the Spirit of God does not dwell in him. This is the spirit of anti-christ. He does not talk against Christ, he just ignores Christ. He does not say evil things about Jesus, he just omits Him from his ministry.

We are impressed with the statements "of God" and "of the world." Here we find the two divisions in the human race. Those who are "of God" are lovers of the Lord Jesus. They have received Christ as their Lord and Saviour; the love of God has been poured out into their hearts. Those who are of the world have the spirit of anti-christ in them, and have no interest in that lovely Man Jesus Christ, the Lord, but are occupied with their own ways and their own gain. Those who are *of* God have a heart *for* God. They love His Word, His work, and His workers. They want to know God's ways so that they may walk therein. The world therefore hates them. The way of the world is not the way of God.

Belonging to God

In verse 12 is an important statement of fact which can only be understood in the light of previous statements. If we belong to God, then the love of God will penetrate our beings, and we will love other Christians wherever they may be found. It is not the thought of loving those "who belong to our church." It is entirely a matter of loving those who belong to God's family, and are in God's fellowship. That love proves that the love for the world has been discontinued, it has been

replaced by devotion to our risen Christ, and a deep affection for those who belong to Christ. All of this is brought about by the Holy Spirit as we find in verse 13. This spirit of life fills us with the attributes of the new life. The characteristics of a child of God are manifested in those who have the Spirit of God.

Again in verse 15 we find the confession concerning the Man Jesus. This confession is not just an initial confession that takes place at one time, but is a continuous affirmation. We affirm constantly, we state it continually. We live daily in the consciousness of the fact that this Jesus who walked in Galilee and died on the Cross, and rose the third day is indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God, equal with God, of the same essence and nature and characteristics as His Father in Heaven. There are those who claim to be Christians who make an announcement in a certain evangelistic meeting, but that is the end of their confession. As you mingle with them at work, or in social circles, they have nothing to say about the Saviour. Their failure to acknowledge Christ constantly does not witness of any change in their lives.

Fear

Fear has quite a place in this chapter. It evidently refers to the fears that those have who do not know the personal Presence of the Lord, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the sufficiency of Christ Jesus. Perfect love refers to that love which

trusts fully in the sovereign power and loving care of Almighty God. All such fears disappear when once the Lord of glory becomes a living reality to the heart and soul of the believer.

Our love for God is based on His love for us, we find in verse 19. If He so loved us, we should have deep love for Him. If He gave Himself for us and to us, we should give ourselves to Him.

CHAPTER 5

John, a great shepherd of the sheep, reveals to us in this chapter a deep desire to have the people of God filled with assurance that they belong to God. In verse 1 he gives a simple formula, and again in verse 10 he re-emphasizes that truth. Then in verse 12 he assures the believer in a new way and adds to that assurance. Even in the matter of our prayer life he gives a formula in verse 15 which should bring sweet peace to the heart of God's child. All of this is summed up in verses 19 and 20. Then the apostle closes the story with an admonition in verse 21.

Details of the Chapter

Let us consider chapter 5 in detail so that our hearts may be filled with the peace of God based on knowledge of the facts:

You will note that in verse 1 the present tense is used. It does not refer back to the time when you *first* believed some years ago. It speaks about a present faith concerning the Man Jesus who is (as well as was) the Christ of God revealed in the Old Testament. If we have been born of God then we will love the Son of God, and will believe fully and constantly in Him. Those who really love the God of Heaven will also love His only begotten Son, Christ Jesus. This love of God and love for God will make us love the people of God and the Word of God. John is indirectly warning us against the false position of those who claim to be Christians, yet have no real heart interest in Christ Jesus, or in the Word of God, except perhaps casually on Sunday morning. He affirms that those who are in love with the Lord will be separate from the world, with its lusts and its attractions (verses 4 and 5).

Christ's Baptism

In verse 6 the reference may be to His baptism and to His death. At Christ's baptism in the waters of Jordan the Holy Spirit came visibly to Him and announced Him as the Son of God, the servant of God, and the preacher of God. At Calvary the blood announced Him as the Saviour of men, and the sacrifice for sins. This thought is carried out in verse 6 where John mentions specifically that the Spirit beareth witness. He did so at the waters of baptism. In verse 8 this seems to be reaffirmed. The Holy Spirit at Jordan and the blood at Cal-

vary announce the authority, the sufficiency and the value of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John further tells us in verse 10 that those who really believe on and in the Christ of God have realized a change in the soul so that there is an inner witness of confident devotion to and faith in the risen, living Christ.

Eternal Life

Note that the God of Heaven has testified (verse 11) that all eternal life is found in Christ Jesus alone. He only can give life, and He Himself is eternal life (verses 12 and 20). Those who believe God will never be found trying to get eternal life through religious acts, or personal merit, or Christian sacrifice.

Verse 12 is as clear as language can make it. If a man has taken Christ Jesus into his soul, heart and life, then he has this marvelous gift of eternal life. If he has not taken Christ, no matter what else he has, he does not have life.

In verse 13, we find that John is addressing his remarks to believers, not to the ungodly world. He wants believers to know that they are in God's family, having God's life and nature in them. He also desires that we shall continue to know the Lord better, more fully, more completely, day by day. Of course, if we walk with the Lord, and in His fellowship, then we will know what His will and desires may be, and will direct our prayers accordingly. How sweet it is to know that He heard, and answered as well.

The sin unto death is a mystery. It may be the one that is mentioned in I Corinthians 11:29-30, or it may be the so-called unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Spirit recorded in Matthew 12:32. The meaning is not clear to the writer. The next verse, however, is clear enough. The two classes in the world are described. Some belong to God, while all the rest lie lulled to sleep in the arms of the wicked one.

Knowing God through Christ

At the close John again assures us that we know Christ Jesus. We know that He has transformed our minds so that we can understand and know both the Father and the Son. Let us read this little book with devotion and care that we may know our Lord more intimately.

As we read this book, and this particular chapter, we are impressed with the fact that nothing is said at all about character building, nor good works for salvation, nor baptism, nor human merit, nor new resolutions, nor any other of the things that some say poor, helpless sinners need to be saved. Christ only is the center of all John's arguments. Our relationship to God throughout this book is based on one's heart faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing that the Man Jesus is the Christ of the Old Testament is the essential element of the new birth. His prenatal glory is included. His power as Creator is included. His saving power is included. All that is said of Him by the Old Testament prophets is

included. Let us remember that God has placed salvation entirely on the basis of a living faith in the living Saviour.

We also read in verse 2 about loving God. This is not the same as honoring God, nor of worshipping God. It is a heart devotion to a wonderful Person.

SPECIAL THOUGHTS

“Love not the world” (2:15). John is just as emphatic in telling us what we should not love as he is in telling us what we should love. There must be some reason for these four important words, “Love not the world.” And then, that we may make no mistake about the placing of our affections, he adds “neither the things that are in the world.” Let us consider some of the reasons that probably prompted John to give us this warning.

First, the world hates Christ; therefore, we should not love His enemies. The world has no objection to the graces of the Christian life, such as kindness, charity, benevolence, forgiveness, peace, etc. They do, however, object strenuously and bitterly to bringing Christ Jesus into any such program. United Nations want peace, but without Christ. Law enforcement agencies want a lawful society, but without Christ. The courts want justice, but without Christ. Business wants profit, but without Christ. He is the center of animosity and enmity everywhere. Why should we love that which

is the diligent and vigilant enemy of our precious Saviour?

Second, the love of the world defiles the soul and prevents either prayer to God, or fellowship with God. John questions both of these sweet privileges in his epistle and tells us how desirable it is to have fellowship with the Father, and also to enjoy answered prayer to God. If, however, we love that which hates God, and if we side with those who are enemies of the Son of the Father, then of course fellowship is broken and prayer is hindered. No wonder John tells us not to love either the world, or the things in the world. His shepherd heart wants us to be in happy communion with God constantly and to walk in His favor continually.

Third, the love of the world hinders growth in grace. John wants Christians to be "perfect" before God. He does not want us to continue as babes, but rather to learn more and more of God's Word, God's will and God's way. He wants us to become mature Christians who understand the path the Christian should take, and who are able servants in His work. This cannot be if we seek the fellowship of the enemies of God, and if our time is spent in learning the ways of the wicked. It is only by living a separated life that the soul can grow into a "full grown man," as we read in Ephesians 4. John would have failed in his ministry had he neglected to warn us against the tragedy of not developing for God.

Fourth, love of the world prevents an efficient

testimony. One cannot preach against the ways of the world if he himself is participating in those ways. He cannot warn against the evil results of wicked companions if he himself keeps company with the ungodly. He cannot talk of the satisfying portion that is in Christ if he himself seeks to be satisfied with the world's pleasures or pursuits. He cannot ask folk to walk with God if he himself is walking with the world. It is only the man on the solid bank who can rescue the man in the quicksand.

Fifth, the love of the world aids the enemies of God. The world wants the people of God to walk in their way. The world entices and attracts the Christian to ruin his testimony. The world tries to offer and does offer alluring enticements of pleasure, of wealth, of honor, and of power — seeking to prevent any from following Christ. The world is full of sophistries, reasonings and logic which it uses persistently to oppose Christ Jesus and hinder His work. If we go over on the side of the world and accept the propositions of the world, then we have aided and assisted and promoted the enemies of God and hindered the service of God. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER

The thought of fellowship with God is found throughout this beautiful epistle. The book was written in order that we might have that fellowship and enjoy it to the full (1:3). John makes it plain

that this fellowship is based on some essential basic principles. One of them is a personal walk with God so that by faith we touch Him, gaze upon Him, and meditate upon Him. This, of course, is all done because of and through the Lord Jesus.

John also reminds us that this fellowship is based on keeping His Word. We cannot expect to enjoy that fellowship if we reject or neglect or refuse that which He says to us. Two cannot walk together except they be agreed, and so we must be Bible students, learning the Word of God, and thereby ascertaining His will so that we may do it. We will not have fellowship with God through learning the ways of false religions. Those who hold false doctrines talk much about those doctrines and the beliefs of their particular denomination, but have little to say, if anything at all, about fellowship with the Father or with the Saviour. It is only through finding Christ in the Scriptures that our love for Him and desire to have fellowship with Him is brought about. "When we turn the sacred pages there we find the Rock of Ages" (William Jennings Bryan). Then when we find this lovely Person our hearts are drawn to Him in devotion and affection.

We also find that this fellowship is based on loving God's people (3:14). We need each other. The Lord intended that we should be dependent upon one another as the various members of the body are dependent on each other. Each one supports and encourages the other to walk with God. If we love the enemies of God, then they hinder

our fellowship with the Lord, but if we keep company with earnest, devoted Christians, they help us in our fellowship with the Lord. It is not natural for Christians to be opposed to each other. Those who engage in fraternal strife are not found loving, worshiping and pleasing the Father in Heaven. All such turmoil hinders and prevents sweet fellowship with the God of peace.

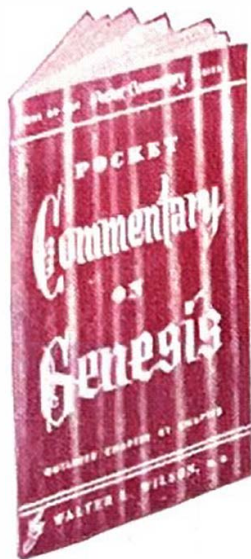
This fellowship is revealed in a personal devotion. You will find that one talking beautifully about Christ and the Holy Spirit and the Father (4:19). There will be the marks and proofs of love in the conversation and in action. The heart will always be wanting the interests of Christ Jesus to be first. Christ will have the pre-eminence in the plans and the life of that one who is in fellowship with God. As God has highly exalted Christ, so will the believer who is in fellowship with God. As God has committed all things into the hands of His Son, the believer in fellowship with God will do the same. The love of the heart will produce loving actions in every department of the believer's life.

Fellowship with God will produce separation from the world. To have fellowship requires time. That one whose time is taken up by the world, the flesh and the devil will have no time for fellowship with God. He must turn away from the call of the world and worldly demands if he will give time to God and God's desires. He will think God's thoughts. He will be happy to enter into God's plans, though the world will have none of it

(5:18). The world will readily see and recognize that person who is having fellowship with the Father because he will walk in a godly way, separate from sinners. God is calling us unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:9).

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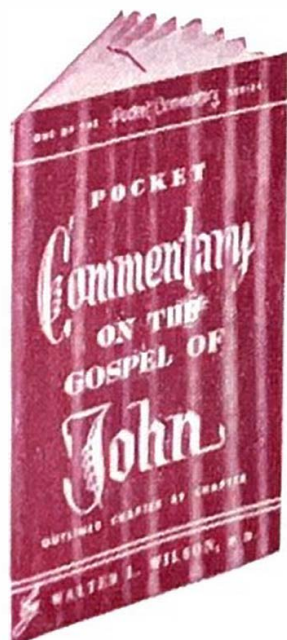
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