

1 JOHN – Epistle

CHAPTER 1

1 ¶ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete.

Toward the end of the ministry of Moses, he related and reiterated some of the important teaching to the Children of Israel (Deut 31). The Apostle John was nearing the end of his ministry and he, as Moses did, wanted to document and share what God had revealed to him. A point that jumps out from the way John introduced this letter is that a requirement for proclaiming should be that which we have “heard, seen, or touched.” We too can “hear, see and be touched” as we are open to the revelations of God to us through His Holy Spirit. These revelations can come to us in our daily walk, devotions, and times of worship. If God has revealed it to us, then we should include that revelation in our testimony (what we say). As we share with each other, this builds fellowship in the Body. Being able to share with other will bring us joy. The oxymoron of a joyless Christian would disappear if Christian walked in such a way and watched for what God is doing and revealing so that we had something to share with others.

5 ¶ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

We must be careful to measure ourselves against God’s standard (light) and not compare ourselves with the world (darkness). God’s goal for us is that there be “no darkness at all” in us. God is working on us to prepare us as a bride without spot or wrinkle. Part of God’s revelation to us is about ourselves. He will show us areas of darkness in our lives and our response must be to shine the light of the word of God on these and walk in the light.

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, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

The result of such ongoing “repentance” is that fellowship in the Body is strengthened and God’s purpose in transforming us and preparing us for eternity is accomplished

8 ¶ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

A trap into which many Christians fall is that of “denial of the fact that we have sinned.” One of the worst things we can do is to rationalize our bad behavior. If we rationalize our sins, then where is there room for repentance and forgiveness

CHAPTER 2

1 ¶ My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

God has provided all we need to live in a such a way that we are pleasing to Him. His word and His Holy Spirit provide the target and the guidance system to accomplish the goal. Since we are of two natures: one that is being put to death and another that is growing in grace and become

conformed to the image of Jesus, we experience failures in the implementation of God's will for our lives. The flesh wars against the spirit and, all too often, the way of the flesh is chosen in our spiritual immaturity. But since the uncreated life of God is now resident in us (we have been born of the Spirit) based on the completed work of Jesus, we have restoration of relationship with God when we repent and claim the atoning sacrifice that is once for all and eternally efficacious.

3 ¶ We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

The word "know" implies more than just a casual acquaintance. This is intimate knowledge available only to those who walk with Him. We do not walk with God unless we agree with Him. Agreement is the same as obedience. It is only by obedience that the purposes of God (transforming us into the image of Jesus) of making our nature of the same character as His (God is love) will happen. If our being is being transformed so that Jesus is living in and through us, then it is totally logical that we will behave as He did.

7 ¶ Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

The truth of our love for God being expressed in obedience to His commands was revealed thousands of years ago. This is not new. However, the implication that John develops from this truth regarding our relationship with each other provides new insight. This insight comes from examining the life of Jesus and those who have been transformed by His love. We can see these truths more clearly as we move from the darkness (carnal nature) to the light (spiritual nature).

9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

The new insight is that *our spiritual condition is shown not only by our obedience to the commands of God but also by our love for others*. If we are not walking out the experience of 1 Corinthians 13, then we are still in the dark -- we are still functioning in the flesh.

12 ¶ I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. 13 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. 14 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

We start out as spiritual children, fresh from being forgiven and excited because we have come to know God through Jesus. As we are maturing (young men) there are many areas in our lives that must be conquered and we find the strength to do this through the indwelling presence of the Living Word. Later in our walk (fathers), we find our faith increased for the new challenges by remembering the great victories and mighty works that God has already performed.

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever.

Since we are in the world, the lure of the world is ever present to tempt us to do things the world's way. The world view (kosmos) is attractive to our old nature and we must be on guard to avoid joining the losing side of the battle. The short-term and temporary pleasure that the world offers is just that. Its fruit is poison and bitter and the wine is of the dragon. It has no lasting value and keeps us from the true pleasures that are found at the right of the Father. "Thou wilt shew me

the path of life: in thy presence [is] fulness of joy; at thy right hand [there are] pleasures for evermore. (Ps 16:11)

18 ¶ Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. 20 ¶ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. 21 I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.

In the song of Moses, he warned that their “day of disaster was near.” John (in the first century) was convinced that he was living in the last days (or hours). If the end time was near then, it is upon now - we are in the last minutes of the Judgment day clock. The opposition to Christ (and Christians) is rampant. More Christians have been martyred in this century than in the previous 19 centuries combined. The boldness of the spirit of antichrist is evident all around us. It is even in some of those institutions that call themselves churches. Many have abandoned the faith but have retained the name. These are facades and do not have the Spirit of God in them. Consequently, they are devoid of truth. Those who have been anointed by the Holy Spirit know the truth and have the witness of the Spirit within their spirits.

22 Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. 23 No-one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 24 See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he promised us—even eternal life.

The great Lie of the enemies of God is that Jesus was just a mere man but denies that He is God Incarnate. The Lie denies the efficacy of the blood of Jesus and the work of the cross. In denying the legitimacy of Jesus, then the person is separated from the Father and all attempts to reach the Father by other means will fail.

26 I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. 27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

Christians need to on guard against those who would attempt to introduce false teachings to us or to the larger congregation of believers. If we can be convinced to follow some other doctrine that differs from the clearly revealed Word of God, then our influence in bringing Kingdom principles to bear in the world around us will be hindered. The presence of the Holy Spirit (the anointing) in our lives is the key to staying on the right road in our Christian walk. The Holy Spirit has come to us to open us the word of God and make it clear to us. Consequently, we do not need some other teacher to tell us what the word of God says. As we listen to and follow the Holy Spirit we will remain in Christ in our thoughts, words, and actions.

28 ¶ And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

When Christ returns there will be an accounting required of the saints before the Judgment Seat of Christ. As Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth (1 Cor 3:11-15), whatever we build upon the One True Foundation which Jesus, will be tested to see what remains. The trivial, the insignificant and the petty will not survive the test but will be burned up. Only those thing that Christ Himself is doing through us will survive. This is true righteousness. Just as Jesus said that He did only those things that He sees the Father do, so we should do only those things we see Jesus doing.

CHAPTER 3

1 ¶ How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

We, as John, should be in complete rapt awe when we consider that God has adopted us into His family. The very concept challenges our comprehension. This relationship is hidden from the sight of those in the world system. They do not understand the relationship we have with God any more than they understood Jesus when He came as Immanuel some 2000 years ago. However, one day the true nature of our relationship with God will be revealed and all will be able to see that we have been transformed into the image of Jesus.

3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Knowing what God is working to accomplish in us, then we must be sensitive to the leading of God's Holy Spirit as He reveals to us areas of our lives that need to be presented as a living sacrifice so that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives that would wash us as with water by the word.

4 ¶ Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

It seems as if verse 4 of Chapter 3 picks up the theme of the first part of verse 1 of chapter 2. Putting those together we find: "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness." The intervening passage between these two verses is a discourse on the remedy for sin if (since) we do miss the mark. It is a discourse on why sin should not be a part of our lives regardless of where we are in our Christian walk. John also warned against those who deny the necessity and sufficiency of Christ and would offer some other way of "salvation."

5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

The reason Christ came was to provide the only acceptable way of dealing with our sins. The reason He was able to take away our sin is that He Himself had no sin. He is the Lamb without blemish. This sinlessness of Jesus is two fold. First, since He was born of the Spirit of God and not of the seed of man, he was free from the taint of the old sin nature. Second, He live a life that was totally in accord with the will of God; that is, it was sinless.

6 No-one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

John correctly concluded that since Christ was sinless, then we who are in Christ cannot continue in a lifestyle of sin. For the child of God, the life that is in us must be the Life of Christ since we have died to self and have identified with Christ on the Cross to put away the old sin nature that used to be ours. Additionally, we daily take up the cross and deal with any vestiges of the old nature that would exalt themselves against the Lordship of Christ in our lives. If that is not happening, then the person has not been born of the Spirit of God and does not know Jesus as His Lord and Savior.

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. 9 No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

Several years ago, in one of the Billy Graham Crusades, he gave a list of things to consider under the heading of "How to Know You are Saved." The preceding verses are essentially such a check list. You could almost reduce this to "Righteous is as righteous does." This really gets back to the assertion that a person will behave in accordance with what he believes. John is very direct in

giving us a template of how to recognize those who are of God and those who are of the devil. Of course, the first place we need to apply this template is to our own lives. If we are continuing in sin and if we are not able to love a brother in Christ, then we need to examine ourselves to see if we have been born again of the Spirit of God or if we are just playing around and pretending to be a Christian.

11 ¶ This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 12 Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. 13 Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

You've heard the expression, "nothing ever changes" and we can certainly see evidence that persecution of the righteous by the unrighteous has been around since the creation of man. John knew first hand about such persecutions. The fact that he was in exile on the island of Patmos and had been mistreated was proof that the world system opposes the Kingdom of God. Those in the world are convicted of their sins by the witness of those who obey God. Their response can be to repent and be saved or to rebel. That rebellion against God cannot be carried out directly against God -- they can hit God. However, they can attack those who are most like Him.

14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. 16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence.

20 ¶ whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. 23 ¶ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. (1 John 3:14-24)

The self-examination for the Christian is whether "love" is present in our lives. The kind of love for which we should be looking is "self-sacrificing" love. It is the kind of love that conforms to the "new commandment" that Jesus gave us "Love one another even as I have loved you." This is a love that goes beyond "love your neighbor as yourself." If I love you as I love myself and have a sandwich, then I would give you half of the sandwich. If I love you as Jesus loved us, then I would give you all of the sandwich.

The practical application of our love is seen in our actions toward our brothers.

Each of us has the inner witness of the Holy Spirit that lets us know whether we are walking in obedience to what and where God is leading. We do not need to quench the leading of the Spirit but to follow by "walking after the Spirit." It is then (and only then) that we are truly being the sons of God. (Rom 8:14)

The eternal plan of salvation that has existed from the beginning is to trust and obey. We live in Him and He lives in us by faith and by obeying his commands. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God.

CHAPTER 4

1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and

even now is already in the world.

4 ¶ You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. 1 John 4:1-6

There are many voices that would seek our allegiance and the evil one appears as an angel of light. We are not to say “amen” to every thing we hear and read but are to hold what we hear and read up to the standard of the Word of God.

The usually place where the false doctrines are shown for what they are is with regard to the person of Jesus. The test is “Who do they say Jesus is?” The JW's will tell you that Jesus is the Lord but will not confess that He is God Incarnate. The New Agers will tell you the Jesus was one Christ of many. The LDS's will tell you that Jesus married and had children and that we are gods also. The Humanists will tell you that Jesus was just a good person.

Another place that the false doctrines shows up is in a person's world view. Those who have not been born of the Spirit will have only a secular view and will not be able to comprehend spiritual truth.

7 ¶ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 ¶ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

17 ¶ In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:7-21

The ability to love one another (as Christ loved us) is not inherent in humanity. The source of such love is God. Roman 5:5 tells us that the “love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.” If this has happened to a person, then such love is so powerful that it transforms and the love spills out because of the abundance which God gives. If we are not sloshing over with the love of God, then we might want to check to see what kind of spirit we received.

How do we recognize this kind of love. The prime example is how God did it. He initiated the love (it was not a reaction to our goodness) and it was sacrificial and beneficial. If we are loving others in this same way, then we can know that the love of God is in us.

Many are looking for meaning in life -- they are in fact looking for God. They may not know what it is they are searching for, but only God will satisfy the “God-shaped vacuum in the heart of man.” The fact is that people will not be able to see God physically because He is not physical. However (and this is where we come into the picture), if we love one another (the way Christ loved us), then those seeking meaning in life (God is the only true meaning) will recognize it in us. We, on the other hand, might not recognize this in ourselves. (Those whom God will commend at the Great White Throne judgement will be surprised at what they had done -- both the sheep and the goats will

ask, “When did we do that?”) These things we do come out of who we are and are almost unconscious acts rather than a deliberate choice of “I know I should do this because ‘it is the right thing to do.’” The way we recognize that we are properly related to God is by the witness of the Spirit -- Rom 8:16

As we yield ourselves individually to the work of the Spirit in our lives, then the combined effect is that God’s love is perfected in the body of Christ -- among us. This is the measure that the world holds up to the church to see if it is really what it claims to be. “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another.” John 13:35

We should be able to recognize this in the church and such love and acceptance will produce boldness in the Lord. One big problem in the church today is fear of being criticized. Many will not do anything because there are those who are ready to ridicule and put down what they do. This is NOT love in action.

What is more important, if God’s love is in our hearts and we recognize that God has loved us enough to give us His love (His very nature), then we should also realize that God wants the very best for us. This knowledge should give us confidence before God and free us to be available for God to do great things through us.

If a person “loves” God but does not “love” his brother, then the kind of love he has is not genuine. If our so-called love is selfishly motivated, then this situation is the result. Agape (self-sacrificing love) will not be motivated nor controlled by the object of our love but will be based on who we are and the principles that define us.

CHAPTER 5

1 ¶ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 6 ¶ This is the one who came by water and blood— Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. 9 We accept man’s testimony, but God’s testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. 10 ¶ Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. 11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:1-13

The way to receive the new birth is through faith in what God did for us in Jesus Christ, His Son. This belief is more than just mental acceptance, but involves commitment to the fact that Jesus is God's Son. True belief is acceptance of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, as the Lord of our lives. When we receive Him as Lord, then He quickens (gives life) to our spirits and we are born of His Spirit. This is the new birth. After we have experienced the new birth, part of the evidence is an confident faith that Jesus is the Christ.

The evidence that we love God is seen in our love for His children: Sometimes it is difficult to show our love for God in concrete ways. We can feel the emotion of love and express that in times of praise and worship but love needs to be demonstrated. John is suggesting that one way to do this is to show love to God's children. Sometimes that is not easy. We know we ought to love our fellow Christians without being told; however, we can add to that the command of Jesus that we are to "love

one another, even as He loved us." Of course, the general way that we show our love for God is in obedience to Him.

God wants us to keep His commandments. Jesus challenged His disciples to "take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light." This is, in effect, a call to obedience and discipleship and a promise for help in carrying out what is required. To overcome the world is to gain victory over its sinful pattern of life which is just another way of describing obedience to God. For a true believer this is not a distasteful thing. Those who have been born again have the Holy Spirit living in them and He provides the ability and power and even the desire to do that which is pleasing to God.

John once again emphasized the importance of our beliefs. Who overcomes the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Who is born of God? The one that believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Who has the Holy Spirit living in him? The one that believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus came by "water" and "blood". The conventional interpretation of this is that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God at His baptism (water) and by the events surrounding the crucifixion (blood). One of the heresies that John was combating was that Jesus was just a man upon whom the "Christ consciousness" came at His baptism and left Him before He died on the cross. Therefore, the conclusion of the heresy is that He was born an ordinary human and died an ordinary human. I believe John is telling us Jesus was born the Son of God (water) and died on the cross as the Son of God (blood) and was the Son of God all the time in between. The witness of His physical birth testifies to His Sonship and the witness of His passion, including the death, burial and resurrection testifies to His Sonship because of the power of the Spirit that raised Him from death.

We have within us the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the Son of God, plus we have the evidence of His birth and death that were miraculous. John is making the point that three witnesses who all agree ought to be enough for anyone to be convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In the Jewish judicial system, if two or three witness could be found to agree then that information was taken as truth. I believe that the main problem of unbelief today is not that people cannot find the evidence that proves that Jesus is the Son of God--there is plenty of evidence. It is not that the evidence is not believable -- most is plain as day. The problem is that people WILL NOT believe. It is a matter of willingness and not a matter of ability to believe.

John points out the seriousness of refusing to believe Jesus is the Son of God in spite of all the evidence that He is. John said it is as if we were calling God a liar. God gave evidence and testimony that Jesus was His Son. God also gave the record for those of us who were not there at the time. We can see in the account of the life of Jesus that He was "eternal life". God has given us Jesus -- for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son -- and, therefore, He has given us eternal life. If we have Jesus abiding in us, then we have eternal life abiding in us. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." God gives this to us as a gift that we cannot earn nor buy. It is by grace that we are saved. This is God's unmerited favor -- it is not a reward for being good. It is up to us to believe and receive this gift by faith. We don't have eternal life apart from Jesus Christ, for He **is** life eternal. John does not say that God *will* give us eternal life but that He *has* given us eternal life. It is a possession that we have right now.

God wants us to be confident in our position in Him. We can **know** we have eternal life. We don't have to just hope it or wish it were so. We can know. If you have any doubt in your mind whether or not you have surrendered to Jesus, then the most important thing for you to do is to take care of that doubt. Surrender now and ask Jesus to live in you by His Holy Spirit and take control of your life. You can know, it is important that you do.

14 ¶ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us— whatever we ask— we know that we have what we asked of him. 16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death. 18 ¶ We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. 19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. 20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true— even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. 21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. 1 John 5:14-21

Jesus had assured His disciples (and us) that whatsoever we ask in His name, that God will give it to us. Some have thought that this means that all we have to do is tack on to any request the incantation “In Jesus name” and it just happens. John provides some needed clarification on this promise with regard to what it means to ask in Jesus’ name. Jesus told us that He did only the will of His Father. And now we see that we should be praying in agreement with the will of God. It is rather surprising to many that John told us that we can’t even have confidence that God hears our prayers unless they are in alignment with His will. When that criteria is met, then we can rest in the promise of Jesus that we shall have that for which we prayed.

Some have written that John (in verses 16 and 17) is writing about praying for a believing brother in Christ. If that is the case, then that person (brother) would already have life which comes from have been born again of the Spirit of God. Otherwise, he would not be a brother in Christ, and you can’t be born again twice. We would have to conclude that John is writing about someone who is not saved and commits sins. We should certainly be prayer for all we know who have not experienced the saving grace of Jesus Christ. If the person deliberately and continually rejects the conviction of the Holy Spirit, then he cannot be saved and prayers for his salvation will not be effective.

In the case of a brother in Christ who falls into sin, we can know and be assured that he will not continue such a way of life. If we are born of the Spirit, then we will have died to self and the devil cannot have victory over us. This protection is a major difference between those who are still under the domination of the “world system” and those who have entered into the Kingdom of God.