

## Hebrews—The Writer

### I. Identity

- The book of Hebrews is anonymous
- The writer of Hebrews does not give his name
  - \*we can assume the writer is male, since he uses a masculine Greek participle to describe himself (in 11:32)
  - “The one place in the epistle where the requirements of Greek grammatical gender indicate the author’s sex uses the masculine” (Bruce, *Hebrews*, xl)
- Multiple writers have been suggested
  - (1) Paul
  - (2) Barnabas
  - (3) Luke
  - (4) Apollos
  - (5) Silvanus (Silas)
  - (6) Philip
  - (7) Priscilla
  - (8) Clement
- We cannot know who the author was
  - “Who wrote the Epistle God only knows” (Origen)

### A. Arguments for Pauline Authorship

- (1) *The theology sounds like Paul*
  - (2) *The thought sounds like Paul*
  - (3) *The reference to Timothy (13:23) could sound like Paul*
- “You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon”
- \*but it sounds more like a companion of Paul
  - \*Paul would be more likely to say, “my son Timothy”

### B. Arguments Against Pauline Authorship

- (1) *The writer of Hebrews does not mention his name, whereas Paul identifies himself in his “other” epistles*
  - (2) *The writer of Hebrews is dependent on the eyewitnesses of Jesus’ earthly ministry (2:3), whereas Paul claims first-hand information (Gal 1:11-24)*
- “The writer of Hebrews seemed to identify himself with second generation Christians, something that Paul would probably never have one” (Allen, 40)
- “After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was **confirmed to us by those who heard**” (Heb 2:3)
- “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received

it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:12)

(3) *The writer of Hebrews quotes from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) exclusively, whereas Paul quotes from the Hebrew and the Septuagint*

(4) *The writing style and vocabulary are considerably different from Paul’s “other” epistles*

“Only the student of the Greek Testament can appreciate this situation fully. It is a difference that is not easily explained by the change of subject-matter or the variation of moods in a writer”

(Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 300-301)

### **C. Concluding Remarks**

-The theology is definitely Pauline

-Much of the thought and vocabulary are Pauline

“Origen was the first to suggest the theory that the thoughts were from Paul but the composition was from someone else” (Allen, 32)

-Most students of Paul would agree today

“A growing consensus against Pauline authorship developed in the twentieth century” (Allen, 34)

-Hebrews was likely written by an associate of Paul

-Barnabas would make a likely candidate

\*a view supported by Tertullian (200 A.D.)

(1) A Levite

(2) A Jew who would write to Jews

(3) A close companion of Paul, who would communicate Paul’s message in a way that closely resembles Paul

(4) A man who grew up on Cyprus with a Hellenistic mindset and, possibly, a more refined Greek writing style

-But we have no “other” writings from Barnabas to compare with

-Apollos would make a likely candidate

\*first suggested by Martin Luther

\*supported by Baptist Greek scholar A. T. Robertson

(1) A Jew, who would write to Jews

(2) A Jew, who would know the Old Testament well

(3) An Alexandrian Jew, who would know the Septuagint well

(4) A man of great learning and eloquence, who would write in a more refined literary style

(5) A close friend of Paul, who would communicate Paul’s message in a way that closely resembles Paul

-But, we have no “other” writings from Apollos to compare with

-And, there is no support for Apollos in early church tradition

- Luke would make a likely candidate as well
  - \*a view held by some early church fathers
  - \*a view supported by John Calvin
- Many similarities between the writing style of Hebrews and Luke-

## Acts

- The only weakness to this view—many believe that Luke was a Gentile

- \*and many believe the author of Hebrews was a Jew
- “In the nineteenth century, it was considered virtually certain that Luke was a Gentile, and this supposition became the reason many dismissed Luke as a possible author of Hebrews” (Allen, 54)

- It is possible that Luke was a Jew

- “The notion that Luke was a Gentile is far from settled in Lukan studies today” (Allen, 55)

- It is possible that a Gentile could have written Hebrews

- \*a Gentile with a great love of the Old Testament

- \*a Gentile who had spent years with the Apostle Paul

The book has early attestation as Scripture

- (1) Quoted by Clement of Rome in *1 Clement* (A. D. 95)

- (2) Quoted by Polycarp in his *Epistle to the Philippians* (A.D. 120-125)

- The book has long been treasured by the church as Scripture

## II. Setting

- The book was written to Jewish Christians

- Who were being tempted to leave their faith and turn back to Judaism

- (1) They had heard the eyewitnesses share the gospel (2:3-4)

- (2) They had received the gospel, even in the face of

persecution (10:32-34)

- (3) Their early leaders and teachers were dying off (13:7)

- (4) They were facing severe persecution, from Jews and

Gentiles (12:3-4)

- (5) They were wavering in their thinking, whether they should continue with Christ and his church

- (6) They needed to understand the importance of their decision,

temporally and eternally

“We are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul” (Heb 10:39)

## Hebrews—The Date, Place, Purpose, Structure

### I. The Date

-Several matters figure into the dating of Hebrews

(1) Clement of Rome quotes the book in A. D. 95

\*this requires a fairly early date for writing

(2) There is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem temple in A. D. 70

\*this requires an even earlier date for writing

(3) Timothy was still alive, and just released from prison (Heb 13:23)

(4) Many of the readers had heard the early eyewitness accounts of those who saw and heard Jesus (Heb 2:3)

(5) Some time had passed since the readers' initial reception of the gospel (Heb 10:32-34)

(6) During that period of time, some of their key leaders and teachers had passed away (Heb 13:7)

-Most likely, the first generation was passing away, and another generation was taking their place

-The readers had stopped "maturing" in their faith (Heb 5:12-14)

-They were in danger of forgetting "the former days" (Heb 10:32)

-This makes for a date in the *late 60s, perhaps 67-69 A. D.*

(1) After Paul's death

(2) During the Neronian persecution

(3) Before the Jerusalem temple's destruction

### II. The Place

-The *place of writing* is not given

\*we have no way of knowing

-The *location of the recipients* is much debated

-Some would say they lived in Jerusalem

"The internal evidence seems to point most distinctly to Jerusalem and its neighborhood" (Thiessen, 303)

-A more likely location would be *Rome*

"Those from Italy greet you" (Heb 13:24)

\*Jewish "Christians"

\*Jewish "Christians" struggling with persecution

\*Jewish "Christians" who were struggling with their "faith"

-The writer had some Italian friends, who were sending greetings back home

-They were very much concerned about Jewish "believers" in Rome

(1) who had long been part of the Christian community

(2) who were in danger of returning to their Jewish roots

### III. The Purpose

-“*Better*” is the key word in the book of Hebrews

(1) Jesus is “better” than the angels (Heb 1:4)

(2) Jesus brings a “better” hope than the Law could bring (7:19)

(3) Jesus is the guarantee of a “better” covenant (7:22)

(4) Jesus is the mediator of a “better” covenant (8:6)

(5) Jesus offers a “better” sacrifice (9:23)

(6) Jesus’ followers look forward to a “better” possession

(10:34)

(7) Old Testament men and women of faith looked forward to a “better” country (11:16)

(8) Old Testament men and women of faith looked forward to a “better” resurrection (11:35)

(9) Old Testament men and women of faith could look forward to a “better” country and a “better” resurrection because God provided his New Testament people a “better” something in Jesus (11:40)

(10) Jesus’ blood is “better” than the blood of Abel (12:24)

-The primary theme of Hebrews—*the supremacy (superiority) of Jesus Christ*

-The primary purpose of Hebrews—*to prove the supremacy (or superiority) of Jesus Christ*

(1) Superior to the prophets

(2) Superior to the angels

(3) Superior to Moses

(4) Superior to Joshua

(5) Superior to Aaron (and the Aaronic priests)

-Secondary purposes of Hebrews include

(1) Warnings against apostasy

(2) Encouragements to a complete break with Judaism

“Whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear” (Heb 8:13)

-The transition time is coming to an end

-The time when Jewish Christians could remain practicing Jews is coming to an end

-The time when Jewish Christians could live in two worlds—Christian and Jewish is coming to an end

“So let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach”

(Heb 13:13)

### IV. The Structure

- The primary structure of the book is sermonic with a letter closing
- The outline of Hebrews is built around two themes
  - (1) The Supremacy of Christ
  - (2) The Warnings against Apostasy
- The warnings occur throughout, almost parenthetically
  - I. Christ Is Superior to the Prophets (1:1-4)*
  - II. Christ Is Superior to Angels (1:5-2:18)*
    - \*warning against apostasy (2:1-4)
  - III. Christ Is Superior to Moses (3:1-3:19)*
    - \*warning against apostasy (3:7-19)
  - IV. Christ is Superior to Joshua (4:1-16)*
    - \*warning against apostasy (4:11-16)
  - V. Christ is Superior to Aaron and His Descendants (5:1-12:29)*
    - \*warning against apostasy (10:19-12:29)
  - VI. Christ's Supremacy Should Be Evidenced in Selfless Behavior (13:1-25)*
    - \*warning against apostasy (13:10-14)

## Hebrews—The Problems

### I. Is Jesus “a Son” among Many? (Heb 5:8)

- We read in Hebrews 5:8
- “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered”
- At first reading, this verse seems to indicate that Christ is but one son among several
- The translation, “Although He was a Son,” fails to communicate the meaning of the Greek text
- “The absence of the definite article before the substantive ‘Son’ in the Greek text here should not be expressed by the indefinite article in English” (F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 102-103)
- The translation, “Although He was Son,” would be better
- Or literally, “Although being Son” (Allen, 322)
- Greek language has a definite article (“the”), but no indefinite article (“a”)
- The presence of an article makes the object definite
- The absence of the article does not require the object to be indefinite
- Write H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey,
- “When identity is prominent, we find the article; and when quality or character is stressed the construction is anarthrous [lacks an article]” (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 138)
- The construction of Hebrews 5:8 is definite as written
- “Without the article the noun is definite in its reference to Christ alone” (Allen, 322)
- Hebrews 5:8 does not question Christ’s deity
- It stresses Christ’s character as “Son”
- “the quality and nature of his sonship” (Allen, 322)

### II. Can You Lose Your Salvation? (Heb 6:1-8)

- Hebrews 6 is one of the toughest passages in Scripture
- Some believe the passage teaches that you can lose your salvation
- In context, however, this passage is written to professing Christians
  - \*professing
  - \*but, not necessarily, possessing
    - (1) They are part of the redeemed community—externally
    - (2) They may, or may not, be part of the redeemed community—internally
    - (3) They are to prove their faith in Christ is genuine—by enduring

- (4) They would show themselves to be faithless—by abandoning Christ and returning to Judaism
- The expression, “have fallen away,” depicts a willful act (v. 6)
  - Someone deliberately turns from truth to error
    - (1) Renouncing Jesus as “Messiah”
    - (2) Renouncing Jesus as “Savior”
    - (3) Attacking Jesus as a “false Messiah” or “false Savior”
    - (4) Embracing another religion (such as Judaism)
    - (5) Embracing no religion at all
  - Apostasy involves much more than
    - (1) “Backsliding” (a temporary falling into sin)
    - (2) “Denial” (a temporary denial, under extreme conditions, such as Peter’s)
  - These actions are wrong, but they allow forgiveness
  - The apostate—the one who willfully turns from Jesus—can never be forgiven (v. 6)
    - “It is impossible to renew them again to repentance”
  - Scripture teaches eternal security—for the truly saved
  - Scripture provides warning passages and assurance passages, because both “professors” and “possessors” are present in the Christian community
  - The following principles are essential in interpreting the warning passages (taken from Fred Creason, *Directions for Early Christians*, 171)
    - (1) “Outward appearance is no sure indicator of salvation. Even the performance of miracles proves no inward change” (see Matt 7:22-23).”
    - (2) “There are many who make initial overtures to the gospel, but who have no spiritual vitality (Matt 13:20-21).”
    - (3) “The genuine believer will remain faithful to Christ, as John declared in 1 John 2:19.”
  - “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they are not of us”
  - Any who “fall away” from Christ were never saved
  - “Warnings like this one take into account the phenomenon of false professions and the fact that only God knows in advance the difference between true professions and false” (Gundry, 467)
  - They were part of the Christian community, but were never part of Christ
  - Those who believe that Hebrews 6 teaches loss of salvation must conclude that there is no second chance

-If you “lose it” you “lose it”

-You can’t “get it,” and “lose it,” and “get it again”

### **III. Who Is Melchizedek? (Heb 7:1-10)**

-Melchizedek is one of the most perplexing characters in scripture

-He appears suddenly, and departs suddenly (Gen 14:18-20)

-He is mentioned but one more time in the Old Testament (Psa 110:4)

“The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek’”

-Some identify Melchizedek as an angel

-Some identify Melchizedek as a Christophany

\*Christ in the Old Testament

\*a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ

-Some identify Melchizedek as the literal king of Jerusalem

\*a worshiper of Yahweh

\*who held the office of priest-king

-Allen writes,

“The only two views that can be reasonably defended from Scripture are that Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ or that he was a Canaanite king-priest” (*Hebrews*, 410)

-We may ask

“If Melchizedek was a man, a literal king of Jerusalem, how did he know about Yahweh (or Jehovah)?”

-Noah’s Sons knew the truth

\*over 1,000 years before

\*as they began to repopulate the earth after the flood

-Most people rejected or corrupted God’s truth (as they do today)

-But a remnant remained faithful to Yahweh

(1) Like Job and his friends

(2) Like Melchizedek

-Additionally, Abraham has been instituting public worship in the land and as a result, the worship of the one true God is present in the land also.

-Genesis 14 makes no mention of Melchizedek’s parents, birth, or death

-This does not mean that Melchizedek was an eternal being (without beginning or end)

-It does mean that God intended Melchizedek to be a type of Jesus Christ

“the eternal King-Priest who would rule in righteousness and peace” (Creason, 167)

-It is best to include that Melchizedek was

- (1) A godly man
- (2) A true worshiper of Yahweh
- (3) A King-Priest
- (4) A type—or picture—of Jesus Christ

#### **IV. Can You Commit the Unforgivable Sin? (Heb 10:26-31)**

-Hebrews 10:26-27 is a terrifying passage—at first (especially in the KJV)

“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries”

-Some modern translations soften the passage a bit, by stressing the present tense in Greek

- “For if we go on sinning willfully” (NASB)
- “For if we go on sinning deliberately” (ESV)
- “If we deliberately keep on sinning” (NIV)

-But context helps us interpret the passage

-“Sinning willfully” involves apostasy

- (1) Renouncing Jesus
- (2) Leaving the Christian community and the church
- (3) Returning to Judaism and the synagogue

-It would be similar today to a

- (1) “Christian” returning to Buddhism
- (2) “Christian” returning to Mormonism
- (3) “Christian” returning to Islam

-Such persons have

- “trampled under foot the Son of God” (v. 29)
- “regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant” (v. 29)
- “insulted the Spirit of grace” (v. 29)

-The unforgivable sin is apostasy

-The writer of Hebrews warns his readers

-He encourages his readers as well

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering” (v. 23)

“But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul” (v. 39)

-This passage would apply to “Christians” (of all backgrounds) who turn from Christ to “atheism”

-Bart Ehrman—chair of the Religious Studies Department at the UNC—is a good example

- (1) Witnessed to by a Youth for Christ leader in high school
  - (2) Claimed a “born again” experience, an experience that he now mocks
  - (3) Graduated from Moody Bible Institute
  - (4) Went off to Wheaton College
  - (5) Abandoned his “faith” at Princeton Seminary
  - (6) Has become famous attacking Scripture and Christianity
- Ehrman now calls himself a “happy agnostic”  
-Who no longer believes in eternal life  
“I think you just cease to exist, like the mosquito you swatted yesterday” (*Christianity Today*, June 2006, 26)

## Hebrews—The Message

-The message of Hebrews is built around *the supremacy (superiority) of Jesus Christ*

-The Jewish “believers”—who were in danger of returning to Judaism—needed to understand

- (1) Who Jesus is
- (2) What they were leaving behind

-So the writer shows that Jesus is superior to everyone and everything in Judaism

### I. Christ Is Superior to the Prophets (1:1-3)

-God revealed his word through the prophets

-God revealed himself through his Son

### II. Christ Is Superior to Angels (1:4-2:18)

-The Jews had a curious affinity for angels

-Many Jews elevated angels—far above what Scripture teaches  
(see the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran)

-The writer of Hebrews condemns these teachings

-Jesus is “much better” than the angels (1:4)

-Angels are but “ministering spirits,” who “serve” believers (1:14)

-Jesus is (based on OT quotations from Psa 2, 45, 102, 104, 110)

- (1) Son (1:5)
- (2) Ruler (1:8)
- (3) God (1:8)
- (4) Creator (1:10)
- (5) Eternal (1:11)
- (6) Changeless (1:11-12)
- (7) Victor (1:13)

-The Jehovah’s Witnesses struggle with Heb 1:8

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever”

-Their New World Translation reads

“God is your throne forever and ever”

-Suffering believers can take great comfort in Heb 1:13

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”

-“Make your enemies a footstool for your feet”

“refers to the ancient custom of the victor putting his foot on the neck of a conquered king. It pictures absolute victory (Creason, 156)

-Jesus humbled himself for a brief time (2:9-18)

- (1) Becoming “lower” than the angels (2:9)
- (2) Partaking of “flesh and blood” (2:14)

(3) Becoming like “his brethren” (2:17)

-Jesus humbled himself for a purpose

(1) So he could die for man’s sin (2:9)

“so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone”

(2) So he could understand—experientially—man’s plight

(2:10-11)

(3) So that he might deliver believers from the power of Satan

(2:14)

(4) So that he might deliver believers from the fear of death

(2:15)

(5) So he can function as the believer’s high priest (2:17-18)

“so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest” (v. 17)

“for since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered,

He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (v. 18)

-We don’t need a human priesthood

-We don’t need any man or woman to serve as our “go-between” with

God

-We have a divine priesthood

-God the Son—is

(1) Our “brother”

(2) Our “priest”

-He understands us, he sympathizes with us, he intercedes for us

### **III. Christ Is Superior to Moses (3:1-3:19)**

“Moses was revered among the Jews—and with good reason.

Arguably the greatest man of the Old Testament, Moses led Israel forth from the land of Egypt” (Creason, 159).

-Jesus is “worthy” of far more “glory” than Moses

-Moses was a “servant” in God’s household

-Jesus is the “Son” over God’s household

-Many of the Israelites rebelled against Moses

\*and were unable to enter into God’s “rest”

-The readers of this epistle dare not follow their example, by rebelling against Christ

“Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls from the living God” (3:12)

-They can prove the genuineness of their “faith” if they remain faithful

“For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end” (3:14)

### **IV. Christ Is Superior to Joshua (4:1-16)**

- God has promised “rest” to his people
- The land of Canaan (for Israel) pictures heaven (for the Christian)
  - (1) Joshua brought his people temporal rest, by leading them into Canaan
  - (2) Jesus offers his people eternal rest, by leading them into heaven
- The KJV, “if Jesus had given them rest” (v. 8), is better translated, “if Joshua had given them rest” (NASV, etc.)
- “Jesus” is simply the Greek form of the Hebrew “Joshua”
- “The Greek text knows no distinction between the names of the Old Testament Joshua and the New Testament Jesus” (Gundry, 464)
- All the Israelites of Moses’ and Joshua’s day had the promise of “rest” in Canaan
  - But only those who believed received the promise
  - The Jewish readers of Hebrews (like all professing Christians) have the promise of “rest” in heaven
    - But only those who truly believe will receive the promise
    - Attention to the written Word* is essential to assurance of salvation
    - “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword” (4:12)
    - Scripture reveals our soul’s condition
      - (1) Our thoughts
      - (2) Our motives
    - “Like the formidable two-edged sword of the Roman military, God’s word cuts and pierces, laying bare the inner part of man, whether good or evil” (Creason, 161)
    - Attention to the living Word* is essential to assurance of salvation
    - “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (4:13)
    - Jesus—through the Holy Spirit—reveals our soul’s condition
      - (1) Our thoughts
      - (2) Our motives
    - We endure—as we spend time in the Word of God
      - \*letting it speak to us
    - We endure—as we spend time with the Spirit of God
      - \*letting him speak to us
    - We are in great danger, when we begin to neglect the Word of God
      - \*when we hide from scripture’s convicting power
    - We are in great danger, when we begin to neglect the Spirit of God

- \*when we hide from the Spirit's convicting power
- We are so tempted to try to hide from sin
- We are so tempted to try to harden ourselves to the conviction of sin
- But we can be comforted—even as we see our sin
- And we can “hold fast”—even as we grow frustrated with our sin
- Our great High Priest intercedes for our sin
  - (1) He can sympathize—because he was tempted (v. 15)
  - (2) He will help—because he is gracious (v. 16)
- We can “draw near with confidence”
  - (1) Seeking God's forgiveness—again, and again, and again
  - (2) Experiencing God's forgiveness—again, and again, and again

## **V. Christ Is Superior to Aaron and His Descendants (5:1-12:29)**

- A Jewish reader would be suspicious of Christ's priestly work
- After all, OT priests were descendants
  - (1) of the tribe of Levi
  - (2) through the family of Aaron
- Jesus was a descendant
  - (1) of the tribe of Judah
  - (2) through the family of David
- “It is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests (7:14)

### **A. A Called Priest (5:1-10)**

- (1) *The Aaronic priest was called of God (5:1-4)*
- (2) *Jesus was called of God as well (5:5-10)*
  - \*not as an Aaronic priest
  - \*but as a Melchizedekian priest

### **B. A Better Priest (7:1-28)**

- (1) *Melchizedek was superior to Levi (7:1-10)*
  - He was a “king-priest” who received tithes from Abraham, and from Levi through Abraham
  - “And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes” (7:9)
- (2) *The Melchizedekian priesthood is superior to the Levitic priesthood (7:11-26)*
  - \*an eternal priesthood (7:16-17; 22-23)
  - \*a sinless priesthood (7:26-28)
  - \*a once-for-all sacrifice (7:27)
- “who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people,

because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (v. 27)  
**C. A Better Covenant (8:1-10:18)**

-In *Jeremiah 31* God promised a *new covenant*, written in the *hearts* of His people (vv. 31-34)

-The writer of Hebrews describes this new, and better covenant

(1) *In a heavenly sanctuary (8:1-6)*

(2) *In the hearts of believers (8:10)*

(3) *With complete forgiveness (8:12)*

(4) *With a better sacrifice (9:12; 9:23-28)*

“and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (9:12)

“but now once at the consummation of the ages he has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (9:26)

(5) *With a completed sacrifice (10:1-18)*

“but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God” (10:12)

-The implications of these words would be startling to Jewish believers

(1) Who had received Christ as Savior

(2) Who continued to take part in temple sacrifices

-The temple sacrifices were no longer needed

-By implication, the temple sacrifices must end

-The time had come for Jewish believers—to break away from the past

-Very soon, God would hasten their exit from the old way

\*by destroying the temple in Jerusalem (in 70 A.D.)

-Listen to these words from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1995)

“The Eucharist is also a sacrifice. . . . In the Eucharist Christ gives up the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he ‘poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (p. 380)

-But Hebrews 9-10 gives a much different message

“By demanding the continued sacrifice, Roman Catholicism undermines the sufficiency of Christ’s death on the cross. The Catholic Church teaches that one sacrifice was not enough, that only the continued sacrifice of the mass can meet the needs of man” (Creason, 178).

### **D. A Lasting Devotion (10:19-12:29)**

- The one who is
  - (1) A called priest (5:1-10)
  - (2) A better priest (7:1-28)
- The one instituted a better covenant (8:1-10:18)
- Demands—and deserves—a lasting devotion (10:19-12:29)
- The Jewish believers—and all believers—must continue on—in faith
  - “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith” (10:22)
  - “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (10:23)
  - “For we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul” (10:39)
- Hebrews 11*—is the great *Faith Chapter* in Scripture
  - \*where the writer looks at the great heroes of the past
- Hebrews 12:1-2*—compares the Christian life to a long-distance race
  - (1) We must be committed to completing the race
    - “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”
  - (2) We must be focused on the finish line
    - “Fixing our eyes on Jesus”
- The “Christian” who looks at circumstances—may fall away
- The “Christian” who looks at the costs involved—may fall away
- The “Christian” who focuses on the pain involved—may fall away
- But the Christian who is focused on Jesus—will keep on going

### **VI. Christ’s Supremacy Should Be Evidenced in Selfless Behavior (13:1-25)**

- The time for decision had come
- The Jewish believers must choose (1) Christ or (2) Self
  - (1) Jesus had suffered outside the gate (13:12)
  - (2) They must be willing to go outside the camp (13:13)
  - (3) Jesus had suffered reproach (13:13)
  - (4) They must be willing to bear his reproach (13:13)
- The Jewish believers must choose (1) this life or (2) the life to come
  - “For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come” (13:14)
- The time for decision has come for us as well
- What will we choose?

## 1 Peter—The Writer

### I. The Identity

-Peter's authorship of 1 Peter was never questioned until recent times

-Most of the attacks are quite silly

(1) *Peter could never have written such good quality Greek*

\*The Peter of the gospels was an incredibly intelligent man

\*Galilee of Jesus' day was bi- or tri- lingual

\*Peter had spent many years in the Gentile (Greek world)

\*Peter could have had help from Silas (Silvanus) in his vocabulary and sentence structure (1 Pet 5:12)

(2) *Much of 1 Peter's theology is Pauline in nature*

\*Peter had spent much time with Paul

\*Peter had read many of Paul's letters (2 Pet 3:15-16)

\*Peter had two of Paul's companions with him—Silas, Mark

\*Peter and Paul were friends, not competitors

\*Peter and Paul had common goals, to further the gospel of Christ

### A. Internal Evidence

-Internal evidence is strong

-The book claims to have been written by Peter (1:1)

-The book has many allusions to events in Peter's life with Jesus

\*events and sayings that had a lasting impact on Peter

-The contents of the book have marked similarities with Peter's sermons in Acts

\*similar subject matter

\*similar emphases

-The contents of the book have marked similarities with Peter's personality

-The book is filled with imperatives (or commands)

\*a strong man

\*preaching a strong message

"It is Peter at his regenerate best" (Tenney, *NT Survey*, 352)

### B. External Evidence

-External evidence for Petrine authorship is strong as well

"This Epistle was universally recognized as a work of the Apostle Peter in the early Church" (Thiessen, *Introduction to the NT*, 279)

-1 Peter was included in the *homologoumena*, the books whose canonicity were accepted by the early church without debate

-The book is quoted by such early writers as

- (1) Clement (late 1<sup>st</sup> century)
- (2) Polycarp (early 2<sup>nd</sup> century)

## **II. The Setting**

-Peter is not mentioned again in Acts after the Jerusalem Council (A.D. 48-49)

-Apparently, he was not in Jerusalem when Paul was arrested (A.D. 57)

-Apparently, he spent his last years traveling the Roman Empire, preaching

-Peter was not in Rome when Paul wrote the book of Romans

-Peter was probably not in Rome when Paul wrote his prison epistles

-He must have arrived in Rome some time in the early 60s

-There is no evidence at all—as Roman Catholics teach—that Peter

- (1) Founded the church at Rome

- (2) Spent much of his ministry life pastoring the church at Rome

-Peter recognizes that local and social persecution has been a part of the church's history to this point

-Additionally, persecution is about to or already had broken out against Christians through the Roman government

-Peter writes this letter then to encourage believers to remain holy in the midst of social, cultural, and political persecution

## 1 Peter—The Date, Place, Purpose, Structure

### I. The Date

- Nero was emperor of Rome from A.D. 54-68
- During his reign (A.D. 64-68), Rome began the first organized persecution of believers
- Peter wrote this book some time around A.D. 65
  - \*just as the Neronian persecution was breaking out

### II. The Place

- Peter is writing from *Rome*
- “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings” (1 Pet 5:13)
- Some view Peter’s designation literally and understand it as a reference to Babylon on the Euphrates
  - (1) The city of Babylon was nearly uninhabited in the first century
  - (2) There is no church tradition that Peter ever went there
- Others see Babylon as a figurative reference to Rome
  - \* “It is commonly used in this way in both Christian and Jewish writings of the time” (Elwell and Yarbrough, 363)
- Babylon is an apt description for Rome
  - (1) Rome was the world capital of idolatry
  - (2) A position that the Mesopotamian city once held
- Tradition places Peter in Rome during the reign of Nero
- Tradition says that Peter was crucified upside down—at his own request—during Nero’s reign
  - “Roman Catholics have corrupted this tradition and attempted to make Peter the founder of the church of Rome and its first pope. These false traditions should not lead Bible believers to reject the strong possibility that Peter did die at Rome. If so, he could well have written this epistle from the imperial city” (Creason, 137)
- Peter writes this epistle to
  - (1) *Gentile believers*
  - (2) Throughout *Asia Minor*
- Some of these churches were started by Paul
- We don’t know how the others were started
- Peter may have visited some of them, but we can’t say for sure
  - “That Peter himself had visited these churches is entirely probable in itself, but there is no evidence in the New Testament to prove it” (Hiebert, 121)

### III. The Purpose

-Peter's purpose is clear: *to prepare believers to live righteously in the midst of persecution*

-He wants to show believers how to live for Jesus in a hostile world

#### **IV. The Structure**

-The outline of Peter is built around his imperatives (or commands)

-He begins with a word of praise

-He moves on to multiple exhortations, telling believers how to live

-This outline is adapted from Hiebert (131-132)

(1) Praise—for our great salvation (1:1-12)

(2) Exhortations—in view of our salvation (1:13-2:10)

(3) Exhortations—in view of our standing in an unsaved world

(2:11-3:12)

(4) Exhortations—in view of our suffering (3:13-5:14)

## **I Peter—The Problems**

### **A. Preaching to the Spirits in Prison (3:18-20)**

-Bible scholars debate this passage

(1) Some have concluded that Christ's Spirit descended to Hades between his death and resurrection to offer the people who lived before the flood a second chance at salvation

"Most of those who adopt such an interpretation infer from this that God will offer a second chance to all those in hell, especially to those who never heard the gospel" (Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Peter* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003], 185).

\*a weak interpretation

\*offered by liberal scholars

\*contradicts Hebrews 9:27

"As it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment"

(2) Some have concluded that Christ's Spirit descended to Hades to proclaim victory and pronounce condemnation to the fallen angels imprisoned there

\*probably the most popular view

"Most probably means that during the time between his death and resurrection he descended in disembodied form into hell to proclaim his triumph over the demonic spirits whom God had imprisoned there because of their corrupting the human race at the time of Noah, just before the flood" (Gundry, 485)

(3) Some have concluded that Christ's Spirit descended to Hades to proclaim victory and pronounce condemnation to the men and women who perished in the flood of Noah's day

(4) Some have concluded that Christ preached through Noah, as Noah proclaimed judgment on the men and women of his generation who, having rejected the message, are now in hell

\*my personal view

"Christ was not personally present but spoke by means of the Holy Spirit through Noah" (Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 185).

"The preincarnate Christ was actually in Noah, ministering to him, by means of the Holy Spirit" (Roger M. Raymer, *1 Peter*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, II, 851)

"The preincarnate Christ offered salvation through Noah's preaching to members of the antediluvian generation, who are now confined to hell because they rejected the message" (Gundry, 485)

## **B. Baptism and Salvation (3:18-22)**

“Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (3:21)

-The flood waters were a “figure” or a “type” of Christian baptism

-The flood wiped away the old sinful world

-Baptism represents a break with one’s sinful past

-The baptismal water does not remove sin

“Baptism does not involve the removal of moral filth of impurity”

(Schreiner, 195)

-But a believer’s baptism reveals

(1) his faith in Jesus

(2) his identification with Jesus’ physical

\*death

\*burial

\*resurrection

(3) his break from his old way of life—through spiritual

\*death

\*burial

\*resurrection

-Baptism is not a means of salvation

-Baptism is an evidence of salvation

(1) an act of obedience

(2) an outward act that signifies an inward change

## 1 Peter—The Message

### I. Praise—For Our Great Salvation (1 Pet 1:1-12)

-We have a great salvation—with a wonderful inheritance

\*imperishable

\*undefiled

\*eternal (“will not fade away”)

-Because of this great salvation, wonderful inheritance,

(1) We should not grieve over earthly sufferings (persecutions)

(2) We should take comfort in Christ’s example

\*of suffering before glory

(3) We should look forward to Christ’s return

\*when our suffering will result in glory

### II. Exhortations—In View of Our Great Salvation (1 Pet 1:13-2:10)

-Our salvation experience should have a great impact on our lives

(1) *We should be “holy” (1:13-16)*

(2) *We should have a healthy “fear” of God (1:17-21)*

\*our God is judge of all the earth

\*our redemption comes at a terrible price

\*not perishable things like silver and gold

\*but with the precious blood of Christ

\*we should live—knowing that we are purchased by God

\*we should live—knowing that we are accountable to

God

(3) *We should love our Christian brothers and sisters (1:22-25)*

\*not hypocritically--for personal gain

\*but sincerely

(4) *We should seek to grow spiritually (2:1-3)*

\*a hunger for God’s word

\*a hunger that feeds on God’s word

(5) *We should seek to reach out, evangelize our communities*

(2:4-10)

\*we are God’s people on earth

\*we are God’s representatives on this earth

\*we should live out behaviorally what we are  
positionally

\*we should share what God has done for us

### III. Exhortations—In View of Our Standing in an Unsaved World

#### (1 Pet 2:11-3:12)

-We are to watch our behavior in the world

\*knowing that we are on display at all times

- We should do our best to be above reproach
  - \*knowing that our testimony is no better than our manner of life
    - (1) *We should be model citizens, respectful of leaders (2:13-15)*
    - (2) *We should be model slaves (employees), respectful of masters (2:18-25)*
    - (3) *We should have model home lives, respectful of spouse, parents, and children (3:1-3:12)*
  - \*examples in every way
- We will be attacked by the unsaved community
- We should seek to silence the attacks by the lives we live

#### **IV. Exhortations—In View of our Suffering (1 Pet 3:13-5:14)**

- (1) *We should be ready to defend our faith (3:15)*
  - “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you”
- (2) *We must be certain to live our faith (3:16-17)*
  - \*people may slander us
  - \*but we better make sure they attack
    - (1) our faith
    - (2) not our flaws
- (3) *We must see Christ as our example (3:17-22)*
- (4) *We must be certain to live our faith (4:1-19)*
  - \*people may slander us
  - \*but we better make sure they attack
    - (1) our faith
    - (2) not our flaws
- (5) *We must be quick to minister to others (5:1-5)*
  - \*pastors must care for their flocks
    - (1) willingly
    - (2) unselfishly
- (6) *We must be submissive to God’s will and purpose (5:6-7)*
- (7) *We must be alert to Satan’s attacks (5:8)*
  - “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (5:8)
- (8) *We must resist Satan’s attacks (5:9)*
  - “Resist him, firm in your faith”
- (9) *We must remember that we are not alone (5:9)*
  - “Knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world”

*(10) We must remember that we are headed to a far better place  
(5:10)*

“Who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ”

*(11) We must remember that we are on the winning side (5:11)*

“To him [Christ] be the dominion forever and ever. Amen”

## 2 Peter—The Writer

### I. The Writer

-The book is written by the Apostle Peter

#### A. Internal Evidence

-Internal evidence is strong

- (1) The author gives his name—“Simon Peter” (1:1)
- (2) The author calls himself an “apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1)
- (3) The author claims to be an eyewitness of Christ’s

Transfiguration

“eyewitnesses of his majesty” (1:16)

(4) The author alludes to his coming death, as predicted by Jesus (1:14)

“knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me”

- (5) The author describes his letter as his “second epistle” (3:1)
- (6) The author claims to be a friend of the Apostle Paul (3:15-

16)

-Such claims leave us with but one conclusion

-We must accept Peter’s authorship, or we must reject the book entirely

“If it was not really by him, it should not be used or respected by the church at all. It is unwarranted hypocrisy to use it for preaching purposes, for it should be removed from the New Testament altogether as a sheer imposture” (Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*)

#### B. External Evidence

-Eusebius included 2 Peter in the *antilegomena*, the books about which there was some debate

\*not as a book rejected, but as a book debated

-There were several reasons

- (1) The book is brief
- (2) The book is not addressed to a specific person, church
- (3) The book likely had a small circulation, initially
- (4) The book was likely unknown by much of the Church,

initially

-The majority accepted 2 Peter in Eusebius’ day (late 3<sup>rd</sup>, early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries)

-There is minimal external evidence before that time

- (1) Clement of Alexandria accepted the book (155-215)

(2) Clement's student, Origen (185-253), cited the book at least 6 times

(3) The Gospel of Truth and the Apocryphon of John (150), apocryphal books, may have quoted the book

(4) The Apocalypse of Peter (120-140 A.D.), another apocryphal book, may have quoted the book

(5) The book of Jude quotes the book (written after 75 A.D.)  
 "As the earliest and most important evidence, taking us into the first century, we would point to the Epistle of Jude. It is the earliest and strongest attestation of II Peter" (Hiebert, 144)

### C. Reasons for Debate

-The authorship of 2 Peter is much debated, especially among liberals  
 -Many liberals date the book to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (150

A.D.)

-These conclude that 2 Peter is *pseudonymous*

\*written by an unknown writer

\*using Peter's name

\*conveying Peter's authority

-The following arguments are used to attack Peter's authorship

(1) *Difference in writing style*

-The writing styles, vocabulary are different

-But writing style, vocabulary are influenced by

(1) The writer's setting

(2) The writer's purpose

-We write different ways at different times, dependent on how we feel, who we are writing to, and what we wish to accomplish

"So far as 1 Peter is concerned, its purpose was comfort and encouragement to believers suffering from persecution. This requires a quite different style and manner from the theme of 2 Peter, which consists of stern and urgent warning against false teachers" (Archer, 426)

-Writing styles are difficult to judge, with such a small sample

(1) Two epistles

(2) Both quite small

-We would need far more material, to make an accurate assessment

"The area of comparison is so restricted that the results may well be misleading" (Guthrie, *NT Introduction*, 832)

"We must be cautious about drawing definite conclusions when our database is so limited" (Schreiner, *2 Peter*, 265)

-Writing styles can be impacted by an amanuensis

- Silvanus (or Silas) may have helped Peter compose 1 Peter
  - (1) A companion of Peter and Paul
  - (2) A much trusted person
  - (3) A person who would have had much freedom in writing
- Peter may have written his second epistle from a Roman jail, without help
- That may explain the more “intense and rugged style” of 2 Peter (Archer)
  - “As Peter was full of impulses and emotions . . . , the same heritage falls to his Epistles” (A. T. Robertson, *Grammar*, 125)
  - The presence of “Hellenisms”, in Peter’s writings, should be expected
  - Peter was no longer just a Galilean fisherman
  - Peter had spent lots of time in the Greek world
  - Peter had been strongly influenced by Greek culture
    - (2) *Attacks against “2<sup>nd</sup> century heretical teachings” (such as Gnosticism)*
      - Liberals argue that 2 Peter must be a 2<sup>nd</sup> century document because it attacks a 2<sup>nd</sup> century heresy—Gnosticism
      - But Peter was attacking early Gnosticism (or incipient Gnosticism)
        - \*just as Paul attacked early Gnosticism (or incipient Gnosticism)
        - The heresy had not fully developed in his day
        - Peter saw the dangers
          - \*along with Paul, Jude, and John
          - He was an apostle
          - He was perceptive
          - He was given a special responsibility
          - Peter warned his readers against these dangers

## II. The Setting

- The setting of 2 Peter is difficult to determine
  - (1) The readers are not identified
  - (2) The place of writing is not identified
- Apparently, early Gnostic teachings had crept into some churches
  - (1) The same churches mentioned in 1 Peter?
  - (2) The churches of Asia Minor?
- Peter writes to address these teachings
  - (1) To warn the believers

(2) To attack the heretics and their teachings  
-2 Peter may well have been written before 1 Peter and potentially could have been written any time between 60-67 A.D.

## **2 Peter—The Date, Place, Purpose, Structure**

### **I. The Date**

-2 Peter was likely written during the days when pre-Gnosticism had begun to take shape and infiltrate the church.

-Most likely *A.D. 60-67*

### **II. The Place**

-The place is not given

### **III. The Purpose**

-To equip believers *to identify and resist false teachers*

### **IV. The Structure**

-The key word is *knowledge*

\*the words “know” or “knowledge” are used 16 times

-Peter wants his readers to know

(1) Who they are

(2) Who their enemies are

-We can divide the book into 3 sections

(1) Growing believers (1:1-21)

(2) Perceptive believers (2:1-22)

(3) Constant believers (3:1-18)

## **2 Peter—The Problems**

### **I. Was Lot Saved (2:7-8)**

- A shocking passage—at first
- “and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds)”
- Lot is pictured in the book of Genesis as a very carnal man
- We would never know of his “righteous” condition from his behavior
- We would never know that God accepted him
- We would even be tempted to call him an “unrighteous man”
  - (1) An unbeliever
  - (2) One who is experiencing eternal judgment
- Lot made some foolish choices
- He never renounced his faith, however
- He never surrendered his conscience
- Lot paid a terrible price for his actions
  - (1) He lost his wife
  - (2) He lost much of his family
- But Lot’s eternal destiny was secure
- In passing, we should focus on several truths
  - (1) We cannot see the hearts of men and women
  - (2) We cannot know the spiritual condition of men and women
  - (3) We can evaluate—based on “fruit” (behavior)”
  - (4) We should be humble in our evaluations—when based on “fruit”
  - (5) We should be slow to “judge” (or pronounce judgment)
  - (6) We should leave eternal “judgments” with God
  - (7) We should remember that the same God, who evaluated Lot, evaluates us
  - (8) We should be thankful for God’s grace

### **II. Can We Lose Our Salvation? (2:20-22)**

- This passage—very similar to Hebrews 2, 4, 6, 10
- Here we have a professing believer
  - (1) Who had
    - “escaped the defilements of the world”
    - “by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”
  - (2) Who had “again entangled in them”
  - (3) Who had even been “overcome” by them

- Such a person is worse off—than if he had never known the truth
- Such a person proves—that he was never of the truth
- “A dog returns to its own vomit”
- “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire”
- In context, Peter is describing apostates
- Men and women—who were part of the Christian community—externally
- Men and women—who were never part of the community—internally
  - (1) They leave the truth
  - (2) They surrender to the error
  - (3) They begin to propagate the error
- These people are not saved
- They did not lose their salvation
- They were never saved to begin with
- “These apostates (whether false teachers, their victims, or both) never were what they seemed to be and returned to what they had been all along” (Kenneth O. Gangel, *2 Peter*, 2, 875).
- Peter’s words are similar to 1 John 2:19
- “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that they would be shown that they all are not of us”
- Endurance is a sign of true conversion
- Those who leave God’s truth for Satan’s error prove that they never belonged to God
- “Those who had apostatized revealed that they were never truly part of the people of God, for remaining true to the faith is one sign that one truly belongs to God” (Schreiner, 365)

## 2 Peter—The Message

### I. Growing Believers (2 Peter 1:1-21)

- A saving faith should be a growing faith
- As believers, we must grow
  - (1) In knowledge
  - (2) In application of knowledge
- When we cease to grow, we leave ourselves vulnerable to sin and error

*(1) We have a new nature (1:4)*

“partakers of a the divine nature”

*(2) We have a new standard (1:4)*

“having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust”

*(3) We are to grow in those virtues that enable us to live by our new standard (1:5-8)*

*(4) We are to remember that spiritual growth is essential to spiritual stability (1:8-11)*

\*believers who are progressing in their faith rarely have doubts of their salvation

\*believers who are not progressing in their faith often have doubts of their salvation

*(5) We are to remember that spiritual growth and stability are dependent on scriptural truth (1:12-21)*

“we do not follow cleverly devised tales” (1:16)

“we have the prophetic word made more sure” (1:19)

### II. Perceptive Believers (2 Peter 2:1-22)

- Growing believers are perceptive believers
- We are able to identify false teachers, false teaching

*(1) We must recognize the certainty of false teachers (2:1)*

*(2) We must recognize the character of false teachers (2:1-12)*

\*they are secretive (2:1)

“They do not openly announce their intentions or fully reveal their doctrine” (Creason, 146)

\*they are sensual (2:2)

\*they are greedy (2:2)

\*they are rebellious (2:10-12)

\*they are arrogant (2:10-12)

\*they are brutish (2:12)

“Those who surrender to immorality, greed, rebellion, and arrogance are but animals controlled by instinct” (Creason, 146)

*(3) We must recognize the message of false teachers (2:17-19)*

\*they are empty (2:17)

\*they are enticing (2:18)

“False teachers provide an attractive alternative for men and women who would escape the restrictions of Biblical Christianity”

(Creason, 146)

“The promise of religion without morality lures the unlearned and weak into a deadly trap” (Creason, 146)

\*they are pretentious (2:19)

\*promising much, they deliver little

\*promising freedom, they deliver bondage

(4) *We must recognize the end of false teachers (2:1-22)*

\*as God judged the angels that sinned (2:4)

\*as God judged the pre-flood world (2:5)

\*as God judged Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6)

\*so God will judge the false teachers (2:19-22)

### **III. Constant Believers (2 Peter 3:1-18)**

-Growing believers are

(1) Perceptive believers

(2) Constant believers

-They are stable, even in unstable times

(1) *Scoffers may deny Christ's coming (3:1-7)*

(2) *Scoffers do not understand God's sense of time (3:8)*

“with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day”

(3) *Scoffers do not understand God's love for unbelievers (3:9)*

“not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”

(4) *Believers are to be looking for Christ's return (3:10-13)*

“will come like a thief” (v. 10)

“looking for and hastening” (v. 12)

(5) *Believers are to be ready for Christ's return (3:14-18)*

## **Jude—The Writer**

### **I. The Writer**

- The writer identifies himself as
  - “a bond-servant of Jesus”
  - “brother of James”
- Most likely, this James is
  - (1) The Lord’s half-brother
  - (2) The pastor of the church at Jerusalem
  - (3) The writer of our book of James
- So Jude—is the half-brother of Jesus
  - (1) Did not believe during Christ’s earthly ministry
  - (2) Did believe after Jesus’ resurrection
  - (3) In the upper room after Jesus’ ascension
  - (4) Part of the Pentecost experience
- Jude—humbly refuses to stress his relationship with Jesus
  - \*he is a “slave,” not a “brother”
- Jude—humbly refuses to list himself among the Apostles (v. 17)
- The external evidence for Jude is stronger than for 2 Peter
- The church fathers make multiple allusions to the epistle in their writings
- Eusebius places the book in his *antilegomena*
  - \*as a book disputed by some
- The questions were likely caused by
  - (1) The brevity of the book
  - (2) The obscurity of the writer
  - (3) The allusions to pseudepigraphal literature
- We know almost nothing about Jude
- He was younger brother to James
- We may assume that he ministered with James, close to Jerusalem

### **II. The Setting**

- We know very little about the writer
- We know very little about the setting
- The place—probably Palestine
- The destination—nobody knows!
- The occasion—Distressing news about false teachers, false teachings creeping into the church

## **Jude—The Date, Place, Purpose, Structure**

### **I. The Date**

- Impossible to determine with certainty
- Likely after 2 Peter
- Likely fairly late in the Apostolic Era
- “late enough for heretics to have made serious inroads into the church” (Gundry, 491)
- A good guess—about *A.D. 60-68*

### **II. The Place**

- The place of writing—probably *Palestine*
- The readers—probably *Jewish believers*
- “The contents are such as would chiefly interest Jewish Christians” (Thiessen, 295)
- The destination—nobody knows

### **III. The Purpose**

- The purpose is clearly stated
- “I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (v. 3)
- Jude writes: to encourage believers to *contend for the faith*
- We must fight—sometimes
- We must defend our faith against those who would corrupt it
- The enemy is not identified
- But the descriptions given seem to fit *early Gnosticism*
- Jude is fighting the same enemy as
  - (1) Paul
  - (2) Peter
  - (3) John

### **IV. The Structure**

- Jude would have made a good Baptist preacher
- He loves “triads” (groupings of threes)
- “Probably they have no special significance beyond marking a mental trait of the author” (Tenney, 374)
- Jude writes in “warlike” tones
- We see
  - (1) A call to arms (vv. 3-4)
  - (2) A description of God’s judgments in the past (vv. 5-7)
  - (3) A description of God’s enemies in the present (vv. 8-16)
  - (4) A call to perseverance (vv. 17-25)

## **Jude—The Problems**

### **I. Quotations from Pseudepigraphal Books (vv. 9, 14-15)**

- Most likely, Jude quotes from two pseudepigraphal books
  - (1) *The Assumption of Moses* (v. 9)
  - (2) *The Book of Enoch* (vv. 14-15)
- Little is known about the *Assumption of Moses*
  - \*it exists in fragments today
- The Book of Enoch* was written about 160-110 B.C.
  - \*a compilation of Jewish traditions
- The NT church never accepted these books as canonical
- But the *Book of Enoch* was well known in Jewish and Christian circles
  - Jude's quotations from these non-canonical sources causes no problem to the interpreter
    - There was a body of tradition in Judaism, some of which was historically sound
      - Paul uses this tradition, when he names the Egyptian priests, who opposed Moses and Aaron (2 Tim 3:8)
      - Jude uses this tradition, when he records
        - (1) The dispute over Moses' body (v. 9)
        - (2) The prophecy of Enoch (vv. 14-15)
  - Jude does not give full approval to these apocryphal books, however "Quotations from such material do not imply belief in its divine inspiration" (Gundry, 492)
    - "It is quite acceptable to quote from a work without endorsing that work in full. Note Paul's citations of the Greek poets Aretas (Acts 17:28), Meander (1 Cor 15:33), and Epimendes (Titus 1:12)" (Creason, 196)

### **II. Relation to 2 Peter**

- It is clear that Jude 4-18 and 2 Peter 2:1-3:3 are similar
- Scholars give four explanations
  - (1) Both writers composed independently
  - (2) Both writers used a common source, which we do not have
  - (3) Peter quotes Jude
  - (4) Jude quotes Peter
    - The last explanation is best
    - 2 Peter is written first
    - Jude makes use of 2 Peter

## **Jude—The Message**

### **I. A Call to Arms (vv. 3-4)**

-“Contend earnestly” (v. 3) comes from the Greek word, *epagonizomai*

\*from which we get the English word “agonize”

-The word was used in contexts of

\*warfare

\*sports

-Believers must take up arms—and fight diligently—when the truths of our faith are under attack (v. 4)

(1) By false teachers

(2) Who try to slip in secretly

(3) Who try to corrupt our churches

### **II. A Description of God’s Judgments in the Past (vv. 5-7)**

-God will judge his enemies

-Just like he has judged his enemies in the past

(1) The rebels in the wilderness

\*who rebelled against Moses at Kadesh Barnea

(2) The fallen angels

\*who rebelled with Satan, when Satan fell

(3) The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah

### **III. A Description of God’s Enemies in the Present (vv. 8-16)**

-Jude’s descriptions are similar to 2 Peter’s

(1) *The false teachers are immoral* (v. 8)

(2) *The false teachers are rebels* (v. 8)

(3) *The false teachers are arrogant* (vv. 8-9)

-Unlike Michael the Archangel

\*the most powerful of angels

\*the protector of Israel

-Who resisted Satan, in God’s power, not his own

“According to early church interpretation, Satan attempted to see that the body of Moses was given a public burial so that his grave would become an idolatrous shrine. Michael opposed Satan and placed Moses in a private grave” (Creason, 193)

(4) *The false teachers are out of control, governed by their passions* (v. 10)

(5) *The false teachers practice man-made religion* (v. 11)

(6) *The false teachers are greedy* (v. 11)

(7) *The false teachers threaten the spiritual well-being of others* (v. 12)

“As rocks (or ‘reefs’) hidden under the water’s surface, these false teachers threaten spiritual shipwreck to those who fall under their influence” (Creason, 193)

(8) *The false teachers promise much, but deliver little* (v. 12)

“Clouds may raise hope, but unless rain comes, the ground remains parched. In a similar way, parched souls find no satisfaction in false religion” (Creason, 193)

(9) *The false teachers are unstable* (v. 13)

(10) *The false teachers are gripers* (v. 16)

(11) *The false teachers are controlled by lusts* (v. 16)

(12) *The false teachers appear learned and intelligent* (v. 16)

(13) *The false teachers flatter for personal gain* (v. 16)

#### **IV. A Call to Perseverance (vv. 17-25)**

-The believers dare not fall away

-They must identify the false teachers

-They must protect themselves, and their ministries, from false teachers

“These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit (v. 19)

-They must persevere, continue on, to the very end

(1) Maturing

(2) Praying

(3) Looking

(4) Hoping

(5) Restoring

(6) Sharing

-Such perseverance demands human effort

-But it is ultimately dependent on God’s power

(1) Believers must work—to persevere

“Keep yourselves in the love of God” (v. 21)

(2) Believers must trust—to persevere

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy” (v. 24)

-The word “stumbling” is *apaistous*, from which we get “apostasy”

-If we are truly saved, God will keep us from falling away  
“from abandoning the faith once and for all” (Schreiner, *Jude*, 490)

## James—The Writer

### I. The Writer

-Written by James

- (1) the half-brother of Jesus
- (2) the pastor of the church at Jerusalem

-Some would dispute this conclusion

-But—there were but 4 people identified as James in the New Testament

- (1) We know little about James the Son of Alphaeus

\*except that he is listed among the 12 apostles

- (2) We know nothing about James the father of Judas (not Iscariot)

\*except that he is listed as father of the apostle

- (3) We know a lot about James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee

\*but he was martyred in A. D. 44

\*likely too early for writing this book

- (4) We know a lot about James, the half-brother of Jesus

\*and what we know of his character fits perfectly with this epistle

-Three men dominated the early church

\*from the years of A.D. 30 to A.D. 65

- (1) Peter
- (2) Paul
- (3) James

-James was the half-brother of Jesus

- (1) Jesus' younger brother
- (2) A son of Joseph and Mary

-James was half-brother to Jesus

- (1) They shared the same mother
- (2) But not the same father
- (3) Since Jesus was virgin born

-There are other theories as to James' relationship with Jesus

(1) He and his siblings were children of Joseph by a former marriage

\*James was a step-brother

\*he was actually older than Jesus

- (2) He and his siblings were actually cousins of Jesus

-These theories need not be taken seriously

-They are attempts at protecting Mary's virginity (for life)

“Ascetic feelings which placed a higher sanctity upon celibacy than marriage caused men to shrink from the thought that the virgin womb of Mary, in which the Eternal Word was made flesh, should also have been the habitation of other babes”  
(D. Edmond Hiebert, *Introduction to the Non-Pauline Epistles* [Chicago: Moody, 1962], 48).

## II. The Setting

- James had not believed in Jesus, prior to Jesus’ resurrection
  - (1) He seems to have followed Jesus for a while (John 2:12)
  - (2) He later rejected Jesus, and even mocked Jesus (John 7:5)
- “For even His brothers did not believe in Him”
  - (3) Jesus appeared to James, after his resurrection (1 Cor 15:7)
  - (4) James believed, along with his brothers, and waited with the apostles and the women in the “Upper Room” (Acts 1:14)
  - (5) James became pastor of the church at Jerusalem
    - \*Paul visits James, when he visits Jerusalem (Gal 1:19)
    - \*Peter sends a message to James, when the angel releases him from prison (Acts 12:17)
    - \*James plays a major role in the Jerusalem Council, protecting Gentile believers from bondage to Old Testament Law (Acts 15)
    - \*James could not control the Judaizers in the church at Jerusalem, and failed to protect Paul from their attacks (Acts 21)
  - (6) James was loved and respected by Jews—believers and unbelievers
    - \*known as James the Just
    - \*known as a godly man, who practiced what he preached
  - (7) James was martyred for his faith in Jesus (A. D. 62-63)
    - \*condemned by Ananus
    - \*the son of the High Priest who crucified Jesus
  - (8) James martyrdom brought great grief to the city of Jerusalem
    - \*from Jewish believers and unbelievers
    - \*was considered a major reason for God’s judgment on the city
- James was truly a great man
- Great men must be measured and evaluated by the times in which they live
- James was a “Jewish believer”
  - (1) He trusted Jesus as his Messiah
  - (2) He remained faithful to the Law of Moses

\*it's civil, ceremonial, sacrificial, moral aspects

-James was a "Jewish apostle"

- (1) He remained in Jerusalem all his ministry life
- (2) He ministered to Jewish believers all his ministry life

-James was a "transitional" character

- (1) He remained Jewish
- (2) He supported the Gentile expansion
- (3) He was faithful in his ministry to the Jewish people during

the time of the Gentile expansion as well

-James became an increasingly marginal character

- (1) The Jews rejected their Messiah
- (2) The Jewish believers had little desire to evangelize the world

- (3) The Jewish era of the Church was fast coming to an end

"Luke's last portrayal of the church of Jerusalem in Acts brings it little glory. Like the Jerusalem temple, the Jerusalem church had outlived its role in the divine purpose. As the temple was about to be destroyed, so the church was to be uprooted and scattered in a few years' time" (F. F. Bruce, "The Church of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles," in *A Mind for What Matters*, 164).

-James served God's purpose, in his time and place

-The book of James was part of that purpose

-James writes—much as an OT prophet would write—

- (1) Condemning hypocritical Christianity
- (2) Demanding a living, working faith

-This message, so needed by his Jewish readers, is still needed by Gentile readers today

## James—Date, Place, Purpose, Structure

### I. The Date

- Probably written before the Jerusalem Council
- Possibly the earliest of the New Testament books
- “the letter could be considered the first New Testament book to have been written” (Gundry, 477)
- A. D. 45-48 is a good estimate

### II. The Place

- Probably written *from Jerusalem*
- To *Jewish believers, in local churches, scattered throughout the Roman Empire*
- “To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad” (Jas 1:2)
- These churches were likely planted by “Pentecost” believers
  - (1) Who heard the gospel at Pentecost
  - (2) Who took the gospel back to their communities
- These churches had been established for some time
- But the believers were struggling to live out their faith in their daily setting

### III. The Purpose

- James has a dual purpose
  - (1) *To condemn hypocritical Christianity*
  - (2) *To demand a living, working faith*
- For James
  - (1) Faith is active, not passive
  - (2) A saving faith is a working faith

### IV. The Structure

- Scholars have struggled to outline James
- Some have compared the book with Proverbs
- Some see “a series of practical exhortations on various topics dealing with Christian conduct in church meetings and everyday life” (Gundry, 478)
- But D. Edmond Hiebert organizes his outline around “faith” (*The Epistle of James* [Chicago: Moody, 1979], 7).
- We can adapt his outline a bit and come up with the following:
  - (1) *Maturing Faith (James 1:1-27)*
  - (2) *Working Faith (James 2:1-3:12)*
  - (3) *Discerning Faith (James 3:13-5:6)*
  - (4) *Enduring Faith (James 5:7-20)*

## James—The Problems

### I. Is James Canonical?

- Some parts of the early church were slow to accept James as canonical
- The book was included in the *antilegomena*, the books about which there was some dispute
- The following factors may explain this early hesitancy
  - (1) James is a “Jewish” book, in a largely Gentile church
  - (2) James is written by a “Jewish” apostle, who did not travel widely in the Roman Empire
  - (3) James is written by the pastor of a “Jewish” church, the church at Jerusalem, a church that gained a poor reputation in the Gentile community
    - \*for its increasing Legalism
    - \*for its poor treatment of the Apostle Paul
  - (4) James is written by the pastor of a “Jewish” church, a church that ceased to exist in A.D. 70
    - \*with the destruction of the city by the Romans
  - (5) James had a very small circulation, initially, written to predominately “Jewish” congregations across the Roman Empire
    - \*written to a small, self-contained group
    - \*was totally unknown to many of the Western churches
  - (6) James differs greatly from the other epistles: *Jewish* (patterned after the wisdom, prophetic material of the OT) and *practical* (rather than doctrinal).
    - \*the least “theological” of the epistles
    - \*written early in the apostolic period
    - \*written before the great Gentile expansion of the church
    - \*written before the great doctrinal controversies
  - (7) James is a fairly brief letter, compared to some of the longer epistles
  - (8) James does not identify himself in the book, as an apostle, or as the Lord’s half-brother
    - “as a “slave” of Jesus Christ
    - \*a reflection of James’s modesty
    - \*caused some debate as to the author’s identity
- James was more quickly accepted in the Eastern part of the church
  - (1) These churches were closer to Jerusalem
  - (2) These churches knew who James was

- (3) These churches had more copies of the book
- The book was
  - (1) Contained in the Old Syrian Version (A.D. 200)
  - (2) Quoted by the Alexandrian church father, Origen (A.D. 185-253)
  - By the time of Jerome (A.D. 340-420) and Augustine (354-430) it was fully accepted by the Western church
- Martin Luther's criticisms of James are well known
- He called James a "right strawy epistle," when compared to the more doctrinal epistles
- We must remember Luther—and his times
- James was a favorite book of the Roman Catholic Church, who used it to teach a kind of "works salvation"
- "Luther's prejudice against the epistle was strengthened by the use that the Papists made of it to defend the doctrine of justification by works" (Hiebert, *Introduction*, 33)
- It is a favorite of many cults today, who use it for the very same reason
  - \*to teach "works" salvation
- Luther was defending salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ
- He saw James—or rather, the abuses of James—as a hindrance to his message
- In reality, Luther's teachings were consistent with James's teachings
- In his introduction to his book of Romans, Luther teaches that a saving faith is a working faith
- "O, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith; and so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. . . . He who does not these works is a faithless man"
- This is the message of James—when rightly understand
- A message that Luther would have applauded—had he lived in a different time, with a different enemy

## **II. Does Paul Contradict James? (2:21-24)**

- "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar...? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. . . . You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:21, 23, 24)
- "What shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say?"

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Rom 4:1-3)

-We seem to have a terrible contradiction, until we understand (1) the words involved, (2) the circumstances involved

-The word “justify” can have two meanings

(1) to “pronounce” another righteous

(2) to “prove” oneself righteous

-When Paul uses “justify,” he means to “pronounce” righteous.

\*God did not pronounce Abraham righteous because of his works, but because of his faith

\*Abraham believed God’s promise (Gen 15) and God pronounced him righteous

-When James uses “justify,” he means to “prove” oneself righteous.

\*Abraham proved himself righteous (Gen 22), when he offered up his son

-Abraham was “pronounced” (Gen 15) righteous because of faith

-Abraham was “proven” righteous (Gen 22) because of works

-We are “pronounced” righteous because of faith

-We are “proven” righteous because of works

-James and Paul were dealing with different circumstances

(1) James was attacking “workless faith” (Libertinism)

(2) Paul was attacking “faithless works” (Legalism)

-Both errors are equally wrong

-Each error must be attacked from a different perspective

-The Libertinists in our churches need to hear about “workless faith”

-The Legalists in our churches need to hear about “faithless works”

-Good works cannot save us

\*but they are proof of our salvation

-Our claims to faith are empty, if we do not have the works to back them up

### **III. Does James Offer a Formula for Healing? (5:14-16)**

-Faith healer Kenneth Copeland says

“God intends for every believer to live completely free from sickness and disease. It is up to you to decide whether or not you will.”

-Many “faith teachers” conclude that physical illness has no place in a believer’s life

-The “prayer of faith” will always heal the sick

-Any believers who struggle with illness or disability

\*lack the faith to receive God’s healing

\*guilty of some unconfessed sin

-An analysis of James 5:14-16 reveals the following truths:

(1) Believers do get sick

(2) Sick believers may contact church leaders, and ask for prayer and anointing

\*many scholars believe that this anointing is medicinal

\*we have a merging of prayer and medicine in the healing process

“Olive oil was a common household remedy. . . . So James may have its medicinal properties in mind” (Gundry, 479)

(3) The sick person is responsible to make the request

(4) The special service should take place in the sick person’s home or hospital room, not in the church

(5) The special service should be conducted by church leaders

(6) The church leaders are not required to possess the gift of healing

(7) Some sickness is caused by personal sin

(8) Some illness is not caused by personal sin

(9) A believer should evaluate his life to see if some sin may have caused his illness.

(10) If this believer has no knowledge of sin, then he should assume his suffering is not caused by sin

(11) If this believer has knowledge of sin, and if he feels that such sin is the cause of his illness, then he should confess it appropriately

\*private sins should be confessed privately

\*public sins should be confessed publicly

(12) Other believers should be fearful of accusing the sick person—of blaming his illness on his sin

(13) The sick person exercises faith by summoning the church leaders

(14) The church leaders exercise faith by crying out to God—believing that God can heal, and that God will heal

(15) Lack of healing cannot be blamed on the sick person’s lack of faith

(16) Lack of healing should not always be blamed on the church leaders’ lack of faith

(17) God’s promises are governed by God’s purposes

\*it is not always God’s will to bring healing

\*we must pray with a desire for God’s will (not our own)

- James's words should be compared to Paul's experience
- The Apostle Paul healed many people
- But he was not able to heal two of his closest companions
  - (1) Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20)
  - (2) Timothy (1 Tim 5:23)
- Paul did not receive healing for his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7-12)
  - \*possibly is some kind of physical illness
  - \*perhaps a painful eye disease
- We are to pray for healing while seeking the will of God
- "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14)

## James—The Message

### I. Maturing Faith (James 1:1-27)

#### A. Rejoices in Trials (1:1-12)

- Testings are a part of the Christian life
- Believers should rejoice in testings (1:2)
  - \*because of their positive impact on our lives
  - (1) *Trials mature us (1:3-4)*
  - (2) *Trials force us to seek God (1:5-8)*
  - (3) *Trials force us to evaluate life (1:9-11)*
  - (4) *Trials endured bring the promise of God's blessing (1:12)*

#### B. Resists Temptation (1:13-18)

- “Trials” are tough times—hardships—that test our faith in God
- “Temptations” are enticements—to sin—that pull us away from God
  - \*they motivated us to do wrong, by promising something pleasurable in return
- We are all tested—James tells us
  - \*these tests will continue until we die
- We are all tempted—James tells us
  - \*these temptations will continue until we die
  - (1) *Our temptations have their source in our own lust (1:13-14)*
  - (2) *Our temptations follow a discernable process (1:14-15)*
    - \*our lust draws us
    - \*our lust entices us
    - \*our lust propels us
  - (3) *Our temptations—if we yield to them—have terrible consequences (1:15)*
  - (4) *Our temptations can be resisted (1:16-18)*
    - \*if we are alert
    - \*if we look to God
    - \*if we value our standing with God

#### C. Responds to Scripture (1:19-27)

- (1) *We must receive the Word (1:19-21)*
  - \*without resisting the messenger
  - \*without resisting the message
- (2) *We must obey the Word (1:22-25)*
- (3) *We must apply the Word (1:26-27)*

- \*by controlling our tongue
- \*by caring for unfortunates (widows and orphans)
- \*by remaining pure in an impure world

## II. Working Faith (James 2:1-3:12)

### A. The Principle Applied—To Relationships (2:1-13)

- We prove our faith by rejecting prejudice—of all kinds
- There is no place in the Christian community—for an
  - (1) In group
  - (2) Out group

### B. The Principle Affirmed—Through Argument (2:14-26)

#### (1) *A Non-Working Faith is Worthless (2:14-20)*

- The Greek text reads
  - “Can that kind of faith save him?” (v. 14)
  - “That kind of faith, if has not works, is dead” (v. 17)
  - “That kind of faith without works is useless” (v. 20)

-In each passage, the Greek text has the article before faith

-The article has a demonstrative force—which can be translated

- (1) “that kind of faith”
- (2) “such faith”

-Verbal claims are insufficient (vv. 14-17)

-Intellectual assent is insufficient (vv. 18-20)

“You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder” (v. 19)

-Demons believe everything about God

\*they just don’t believe in God

-Demons believe everything about Jesus

\*they just don’t believe in Jesus

-Demons could sign the most conservative of creeds

(1) They know far more than we know

(2) They have seen far more than we see

-Demons don’t live what they know and see

-Orthodoxy (right doctrine) is better than heresy

-But orthodoxy (right doctrine) is not enough

-You must live the truth—or you don’t possess the truth

#### (2) *A Saving Faith is a Working Faith (2:21-25)*

-Abraham proved himself righteous—by his works

- Rahab proved herself righteous—by her works
- We prove ourselves righteous—by our works
- (3) *A Living Faith is a Working Faith (2:26)*
- You look at a human body—without a soul
  - \*you must conclude that it is dead
- You look at a professing Christian—without works
  - \*you must conclude that his faith is dead

### **C. The Principle Applied—To Speech (3:1-12)**

- James gives special attention to the tongue
- The tongue has a special place in the Christian community
- The tongue has a powerful place in the Christian community
- We must use our tongues
  - \*for good
  - \*not for evil
- When we control our tongues, we give proof of genuine faith

## **III. Discerning Faith (James 3:13-5:6)**

### **A. Identifying True Wisdom (3:13-18)**

- (1) *Those who claim wisdom should prove their wisdom through good behavior (3:13)*
- (2) *Those who claim wisdom should reject earthly wisdom (3:14-16)*
  - Earthly wisdom has the following characteristics:
    - (1) Envy
    - (2) Selfish ambition
    - (3) Pride
  - Earthly wisdom has the following sources:
    - (1) The earthly
    - (2) The natural
    - (3) The demonic
  - Earthly wisdom has the following impact:
    - (1) Chaos
    - (2) Evil
- (3) *Those who claim wisdom should evidence heavenly wisdom (3:17-18)*
  - Heavenly wisdom has its source in God
  - Heavenly wisdom has the following characteristics:
    - (1) Pure
    - (2) Peace-loving
    - (3) Gentle
    - (4) Reasonable

- (5) Merciful
- (6) Impartial
- (7) Sincere

-Heavenly wisdom has a positive impact  
 is sown in peace by those who make peace” (v. 18)  
 -The truly wise are peacemakers  
 -They use their wisdom to bring God’s people together  
 for ministry

### **B. Practicing True Wisdom (4:1-5:6)**

*(1) We practice true wisdom by combating self-gratification  
 (4:1-10)*

- Our lusts destroy (vv. 1-6)
  - (1) We cause conflict (v. 1)
  - (2) We are frustrated (v. 2)
  - (3) We can’t pray effectively (v. 3)
  - (4) We are at war with God (v. 4)
  - (5) We are desired by God (v. 5)
  - (6) If we resist God, we will be judged by God (v. 6)

- Our lusts can be defeated (vv. 7-10)
  - (1) When we submit to God (v. 7)
  - (2) When we draw near to God (v. 8)
  - (3) When we seek God’s cleansing (v. 8)
  - (4) When we grieve before God (v. 9)
  - (5) When we are humble before God (v. 10)

*(2) We practice true wisdom by combating self-righteousness  
 (4:11-12)*

- We dare not slander others (v. 11)
- We must let God be the judge (v. 12)

*(3) We practice true wisdom by combating self-sufficiency  
 (4:13-17)*

*(4) We practice true wisdom by combating self-aggrandizement  
 (5:1-6)*

- The carnal rich will be judged (vv. 1-3)
- The carnal rich will be judged for several reasons (vv. 4-6)
  - (1) They make their money unfairly (v. 4)
  - (2) They spend their money extravagantly (v. 5)
  - (3) They use their money to condemn men unjustly (v. 6)

- Being wealthy is not sinful
- But wealth opens people to special temptations
- And wealth brings people special responsibilities
  - (1) Those who use wealth selfishly will be judged by God
  - (2) Those who use wealth unselfishly will be blessed by God

#### **IV. Enduring Faith (James 5:7-20)**

##### **A. Waits Patiently (5:7-11)**

##### **B. Lives Honestly (5:12)**

##### **C. Prays Fervently (5:13-18)**

##### **D. Ministers Faithfully (5:19-20)**

- Some of the Jewish “believers” were in danger of straying from the truth
- This was an even greater problem a few years later
  - \*as the book of Hebrews clearly shows
- The Greek word, “stray” “suggests one who has missed his path and is hopelessly lost”
- (J. Ronald Blue, *James*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, 835)
- This person is in grave spiritual danger
  - (1) He was a professing believer
  - (2) He was part of the Christian community
  - (3) He is headed away from the truth
  - (4) He is headed for eternal damnation
    - \*the word “soul” denotes the inner man
    - \*the word “death” denotes spiritual death (not physical)
  - (5) He can be forgiven, no matter what he has done
  - (6) But someone must intervene quickly
- We interpret this passage, much as we interpreted the passages in Hebrews
- A professing Christian is headed toward apostasy
  - “He is evidently one who has been related to the Christian community through a superficial profession of faith” (Vernon Doerksen, *James* [Chicago: Moody, 1983], 139).
- He must be stopped immediately
- Members of the church community must
  - \*reach out to him
  - \*warn him

\*seek his restoration

## **I John--The Writer**

- Who is the writer of 1 John?
- Remarkably, he doesn't give his name
- But we know who he is
- Because the writer of 1 John is the writer of the Gospel of John
  - (1) The vocabulary is much the same
  - (2) The sentence structure is much the same
  - (3) The major themes are much the same
  - (4) The message is much the same
- The writer of John is the Apostle John
- The writer of 1, 2, 3 John is the Apostle John

## **I. John's Early Years**

- We begin with John's early years

### **A. The Son of Zebedee and Salome**

- John was the son of Zebedee and Salome
  - (1) Zebedee was a fisherman
    - \*a successful businessman
    - \*possibly quite wealthy for his day
    - \*because he had some hired servants
  - (2) Salome was the sister of Mary, Jesus' mother
    - \*a close companion to Mary
    - \*during Jesus' earthly ministry

### **B. The Brother of James**

- John was the brother of James
  - (1) A disciple of Jesus
  - (2) One of the "inner three" with Jesus
  - (3) The first of the Twelve to be martyred for Jesus

### **C. The Cousin of Jesus**

- John was a cousin of Jesus

### **D. A Disciple of John the Baptist**

- John was a disciple of John the Baptist
- Who heard John's words
- "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36)
- And followed after Jesus

## **II. John's Ministry with Jesus**

- We move on to John's ministry with Jesus

### **A. One of the "Inner Three"**

- John was one of the "inner three"
- Peter, James, John

### **B. Jesus' Closest Friend**

- John was Jesus' closest friend
- The "disciple whom Jesus loved"
- "Peter stood out more prominently before the public as the friend of the Messiah; John was known in the private circle as the friend of Jesus" (Schaaf, *History of the Christian Church*, I, 415)

### **C. The Youngest of the Disciples**

- John was likely the youngest of the disciples
- Probably about between 14-20 at the time

### **D. A "Son of Thunder"**

- James and John were called "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17)
- By Jesus himself
- Because of their
  - (1) Burning zeal
  - (2) Youthful exuberance
- Zeal, exuberance—misplaced at times
  - (1) They wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village  
\*Luke 9:54-56
  - (2) They tried to forbid another follower of Jesus from casting out demons in Jesus name  
\*Mark 9:38-40
  - (3) They sought the chief positions in Jesus' kingdom  
\*Matt 20:20-24
- Zeal, exuberance—misplaced at times
- Zeal, exuberance—that could be valuable in ministry

## **III. John's Later Years**

- We conclude with John's later years

### **A. Moved to Ephesus**

- Church tradition says—that John moved to Ephesus
  - (1) About AD 65
  - (2) Became head of the churches of Asia Minor  
\*see Rev 1-3

"It was probably the martyrdom of Peter and Paul that induced John to take charge of the orphan churches, exposed to serious dangers and trials" (Schaaf, I, 425)

### **B. Lived Until the End of the First Century**

- Church tradition says—that John lived until the end of the first century
  - (1) The last of the apostles to die
  - (2) More than 60 years after Jesus' departure
  - (3) More than 60 years after the Day of Pentecost

- (4) More than 20 years after the destruction of Jerusalem
- (5) In his late 80s or early 90s
- (6) The only one of the Twelve to die a natural death

### **C. Suffered Under the Roman Emperor Nero (AD 64-68)**

- (1) He was banished to the aisle of Patmos
- (2) He was possibly boiled in oil

### **D. Remembered through Early Church Traditions**

-John was remembered through early church traditions

#### *(1) The tradition of John and Cerinthus*

-While at Ephesus, John was confronted with early Gnosticism

-One day, he learned that Cerinthus, a famous Gnostic teacher, was in the same public bath

-John fled the bath at once—screaming these words  
“Let us fly, lest the bath fall on us, since Cerinthus is within, the enemy of the truth”

#### *(2) John and his disciples*

-As an extremely old man, John was carried to the church meeting place in the arms of his disciples

-When asked to speak he would say (over and over again)

“Little children, love one another”

-In time, John’s listeners became wearied of the repetitions and asked “Master, why do you always say this?”

-To which John replied

“It is the Lord’s command; and if this alone be done, it is enough”

-What a remarkable man

(1) The Son of Thunder became the Apostle of Love

(2) The Apostle of Love remained the Son of Thunder

-Love and zeal

-Zeal and love

-All in the same package

## **I, II, III John--The Setting**

-Trying to study a Bible book without studying its setting is like listening to one side of a telephone conversation

-You're never sure what's going on

-John writes these letters

(1) As a senior veteran of life and ministry

(2) Most likely AD 60-85

-He has some powerful enemies

-His churches have some powerful enemies

-He writes to warn his churches of their enemies

### **I. The False Teachers**

-False teachers have always plagued God's people

-You know some of the people—through church history

(1) Arius—and the Arians

(2) Joseph Smith—and the Mormons

(3) Charles Taze Russell—and the Jehovah's

Witnesses

(4) Mary Baker Eddy—and Christian Science

-You know some of the people—in our era

(1) Jim Jones—of Jonestown

(2) David Koresh—and Waco

(3) Sun Myung Moon—and the Moonies

(4) Marshall Applewhite—and the Heaven's Gate

-But there are thousands of men, and women

(1) False teachers

(2) In small groups, big groups

(3) In small towns, big towns

-The need for John's message—is just as great today as it ever was

### **II. The Early Gnostics**

-Gnosticism is not new truth, but old heresy

(1) It was empowered by Satan in John's day

(2) It is empowered by Satan today

#### **A. The Timing**

-The timing of early Gnosticism is clear from Scripture

-Gnostic ideas began to penetrate the New Testament Church

(1) In the mid to late 50

(2) In the last days of Peter and Paul

-Gnosticism became a threat to biblical Christianity by the late 1<sup>st</sup> century

-The Gnostic threat increased dramatically during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries

#### B. The Attacks

-Several of the New Testament writers attacked Gnosticism

(1) Paul attacked the heresy in Colossians and Timothy

(2) Peter attacked the heresy in 2 Peter

(3) Jude attacked the heresy in Jude

(4) John attacked the heresy in all his writings

\*his Gospel

\*his Epistles

\*his book of Revelation

#### C. The Teachings

-Gnosticism's teachings are difficult for many people to understand

-The Gnostics built their teachings around Greek dualism

(1) The teaching that matter is inherently evil

(2) The teaching that spirit is inherently good

-The Gnostics claimed special "knowledge"

-The word Gnosticism comes from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*

-The Gnostics claimed that their special "knowledge" brought them salvation

-But many of their key teachings were contrary to Christian truth

(1) They denied the incarnation of Jesus Christ

\*that Jesus is God-Man

\*that Jesus is God in human flesh

(2) They denied the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ

\*that Jesus rose with a physical body from the grave

(3) They denied the bodily resurrection of believers

\*that Jesus will rise in physical bodies from the grave

“Gnostics hoped to escape from their physical bodies at death”  
(Yamauchi, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*)

(4) Some Gnostics promoted asceticism  
\*abusing their physical bodies because they were evil

(5) Some Gnostics promoted libertinism  
\*indulging their physical bodies because they were evil

(6) They sought salvation—not through faith in Jesus Christ—but through the “knowledge of secret doctrines and passwords” (Gundry, 50)

-A Gnostic library was discovered at *Nag Hammadi, Egypt* in the 1940s

-The Gnostics had escaped to the deserts, because God’s truth had triumphed

- (1) The Apostle Peter had stood for the truth
- (2) The Apostle Paul had stood for the truth
- (3) The Apostle John had stood for the truth
- (4) The generations of scholars who

followed them

\*though a minority at times

\*had stood for the truth

-We don’t need to fear Gnosticism

-We don’t need to fear the claims of those who think they have discovered a “true canon”

-Gnosticism is an old heresy

(1) Condemned by God’s teachers in that day

(2) Condemned by God’s teachers in our day

#### D. The Methods

-Gnostics were syncretistic by nature

-They were happy to add new religious teachings

\*so long as they could keep their primary teachings

-They were happy to infiltrate new religious groups

\*so long as they could gain control

-The New Testament church provided a great opportunity

(1) It was spreading across the Roman Empire

(2) It was filled with people who did not know what they believe

(3) It was filled with teachers who did not know what they believed

(4) It was a great place for the Gnostics to step in

\*adapt their teachings

\*gain control

-John lived to see this happening

-He wrote to defend the truth

(1) Who is Jesus?

(2) What does Jesus demand of us?

(3) How do we become part of Jesus' family?

(4) How must we behave in Jesus' church?

## **I John--The Purpose**

- John is good at telling us why he wrote his books
- In John 20:31, he gives us the purpose of his gospel
  - “But these have been written so that you may believe in the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name”
- In 1 John 5:13, he gives us the purpose of his epistle
  - “These things have been written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life”
- Two questions have long dominated Christian thought
  - (1) Can a believer know that he is saved right now?
  - (2) Can a believer know that he will always be saved?
- The issue can lend itself to 2 extremes
  - (1) *Scared saints*
    - \*so consumed with doubt that they have little time for Christian service
  - (2) *Secure sinners*
    - \*so cocky that they rebel against God’s standards and calling
- 1 John offers scripture’s most complete discussion of eternal security
- John wants us to have a “know-so” salvation
- He tells us how we can know that we are truly saved
  - (1) Now
  - (2) Forever

## **I. God’s Assurances**

### **A. Of Present Salvation**

- We can know that we are saved—presently
- “By this we know that we have come to know him” (2:3)
- “By this we know that we are in him” (2:5)
- “We know that we have passed out of death into life” (3:14)
- “We will know by this that we are of the truth” (3:19)
- “Will assure our heart before him” (3:19)
- “We know by this that he abides in us” (3:24)
- “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us” (4:13)
- “We know that we are of God” (5:19)

### **B. Of Eternal Life**

- We can know that we are saved—eternally
- “This is the promise which he himself made to us: eternal life” (2:25)
- “We may have confidence . . . at his coming” (2:28)
- “We know that when he appears, we will be like him” (3:2)
- “You may know that you have eternal life” (5:13)

- Eternal life—is not something that we hope to receive one day
- Eternal life—is something we can possess right now
- And we can know—that we possess it

## II. God's Demands

- John wrote this epistle at a critical time (AD 60-85)
- Early Gnosticism threatened to wipe out biblical Christianity
- The Gnostics held to a dualism between matter and spirit
  - (1) Matter is inherently evil
  - (2) Spirit is inherently good
- This dualism led to error in their understanding of Christianity
  - (1) *Heretical doctrines of Jesus Christ*
    - They could not conceive of a divine-human Jesus
      - \*God in human flesh
    - Some described Jesus as a ghost
      - \*who only appeared to be real
    - Some described Jesus as a man
      - \*who was empowered by the Christ at his baptism
  - (2) *Antinomian (or Lawless) Lifestyles*
    - Some Gnostics felt free to live as they pleased
    - They saw no need to abide by scriptural standards
    - After all—flesh is evil any way
    - So it makes no difference what we do with our bodies
    - Much of 1 John is an attack on Gnosticism
      - (1) The false doctrine
      - (2) The godless lifestyles
    - John provides a checklist of God's demands
      - (1) A series of self tests
      - (2) By which we can determine our standing with God
    - As believers, we can be assured that we are saved
    - But we can only be assured—so long as we
      - (1) Believe the right things
      - (2) Do the right things

### A. An Orthodox Faith

- To be saved, we must have an orthodox faith
  - We must have faith in the Jesus of Scripture
    - (1) Not the Jesus of our making
    - (2) Not Jesus as we want him to be
    - (3) But Jesus as God's word tells us he is
- “This is the commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son

Jesus Christ” (3:23)  
 “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (5:1)  
 “Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (5:5)  
 “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (5:12)  
 -For John, an orthodox faith, a doctrinal faith, must include several things

(1) *The unity of Jesus Christ*

-“Jesus” and the “Christ” are one and the same  
 “Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” (2:22)

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (5:1)

(2) *The humanity of Jesus Christ*

-“Jesus Christ” is fully man  
 “What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands” (1:1)  
 “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God” (4:2-3)

(3) *The deity of Jesus Christ*

“Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (5:5)

“This is the true God and eternal life” (5:20)

-I was saved as a little boy

-I must confess that I didn’t understand Jesus

(1) unity

(2) humanity

(3) deity

-But when I heard the truth about Jesus, I believed it

-Many in John’s day were turning from the truth

-They had heard the truths about Jesus

-They were accepting the errors of Gnosticism

-John tells his readers, that they were never saved to begin with

“They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us” (2:19)

-Many leave the truth in our day

(1) To follow false teachers

(2) To worship a false Jesus

- They prove that they were never “of us”
- They prove that they were never saved to begin with

### **B. A Godly Lifestyle**

- The truly saved will believe right doctrine
- The truly saved will have a godly lifestyle

#### *(1) Not living in sin*

- The Greek text reads

“Everyone who is abiding in him is not sinning. Everyone who is sinning has not seen him or known him” (3:6)

- The present tense in Greek stresses continuous action
- A believer’s life should not be characterized by sin
- A believer dare not profess Christ, and give way to sin habitually

(1) Without guilt

(2) Without regret

(3) Without repentance and confession

- Any who “are living in sin” had best beware
- They can have no assurance of salvation

#### *(2) Keeping the commandments*

- Too often Christianity is depicted as a one-sided package

- We receive Christ

- We receive the benefits of salvation

- And little is expected from us in return

- Nothing could be further from the truth

- The Greek text reads

“In this we are knowing that we have known him, if we are keeping his commandments” (2:3)

“Everyone who is doing righteousness has been born of him” (2:29)

“The one who is doing righteousness is righteous” (3:7)

“The one who is keeping his commandments is dwelling in him” (3:24)

- Once again we see the present tense—with continuous action

- A person dare not profess Christ and break his commandments

\*habitually

\*as a lifestyle

(1) Without guilt

(2) Without regret

(3) Without repentance and confession

-Any who are not “keeping his commandments” had best beware

-They can have no assurance of salvation

(3) *Loving the brethren*

-The Greek text reads

“We know that we have passed out of death into the life, because we are loving the brethren. The one who is not loving is abiding in death” (3:14)

“If a certain one should say, ‘I am loving God,’ and is hating his brother, he is a liar” (4:20)

-A person dare not profess Christ and hate his brother and sister

\*a continuing hatred

\*a lifestyle of hatred

(1) Without guilt

(2) Without regret

(3) Without repentance and confession

-Any whose lives are characterized by hate had best beware

-They can have no assurance of salvation

### **III. God’s Provision**

-God demands an orthodox faith

-God demands a godly lifestyle

-God demands that we

(1) Believe the right things

(2) Do the right things

-If we are to know that we are saved

-But—with God’s demands, come God’s provisions

#### **A. God’s Word**

-God has given us the written Word

“These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete” (1:4)

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin” (2:1)

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (5:13)

#### **B. God’s Spirit**

-God has given us the Holy Spirit

“We know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has

given us” (3:24)

“By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit” (4:13)

-Jesus said, in John 10

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (v. 27)

“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers” (v. 5)

-Do you know the voice of Jesus?

-Can you identify the voice of strangers?

-Do you turn from the voice of strangers?

-You can—if you know the written Word

-You must—if the Holy Spirit dwells in your heart

## **I John—The Outline**

**“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life”**

**(1 John 5:13)**

**I. The Foundation for Assurance—Introduced (1:1-4)**

**II. The Tests for Assurance—Developed (1:5-5:3)**

**A. Behavior (1:5-2:6)**

**B. Love (2:7-17)**

**C. Doctrine (2:18-28)**

**D. Behavior (2:29-3:10)**

**E. Love (3:10-24)**

**F. Doctrine (3:24-4:6)**

**G. Love and Doctrine (4:7-21)**

**H. Love and Behavior (5:1-3)**

**III. The Foundation for Assurance—Revisited (5:4-21)**

**The Foundation for Assurance—Introduced**

**1 John 1:1-4**

**I. The Encounter (1:1-2)**

**II. The Proclamation (1:2-3)**

**III. The Purpose of the Proclamation (1:3-4)**

**The Tests for Assurance—Behavior**

**1 John 1:5-2:16**

**I. Who God the Father Is (1:5)**

**II. Our Responsibility—Because of Who God the Father Is (1:6-10)**

**A. We Cannot Walk in Darkness and Fellowship with God (1:6)**

**B. We Must Walk in the Light if We Are to Fellowship with God (1:7)**

**C. We Must Experience God’s Cleansing if We Are to Fellowship with God (1:7)**

**D. We Dare Not Try to Minimize Our Sin if We Are to Fellowship with God (1:8)**

**E. We Must Be Willing to Confess Our Sin if We Are to Fellowship with God (1:9-10)**

**III. Who God the Son Is (2:1-2)**

**A. Jesus Is Our Advocate (2:1)**

**B. Jesus Is Our Propitiator (2:2)**

**IV. Our Responsibility—Because of Who God the Son Is (2:3-6)**

**A. Those Who Know Jesus Will Keep God's Commandments (2:3-4)**

**B. Those Who Abide In Jesus Must Live as Jesus Lived (2:5-6)**

**The Tests for Assurance—Love**

**1 John 2:7-17**

**I. Love—As Contrasted with Hate (2:7-11)**

**II. Love—As Lived in Community (2:12-14)**

**III. Love—As Contrasted with Lust (2:15-17)**

**The Tests for Assurance—Doctrine**

**1 John 2:18-28**

**I. The Manifestation of False Teachers (2:18-19)**

**A. False Teachers Are in the World (2:18)**

**B. False Teachers Come Out of the Christian Community (2:19)**

**C. False Teachers Are Not Part of the Christian Community (2:19)**

**II. The Believers' Protections against False Teachers (2:20-21)**

**A. Believers Have the Anointing of the Holy Spirit (2:20)**

**B. Believers Have the Truth of the Gospel Message (2:21)**

**III. The Message of False Teachers (2:22-23)**

**A. False Teachers Proclaim Jesus (2:22)**

**B. False Teachers Do Not Proclaim the True Jesus (2:22)**

**C. False Teachers Do Not Possess the True God (2:22-23)**

**IV. The Believers' Protections against False Teachers (2:24-28)**

**A. Believers Have the Truth of the Gospel Message (2:24)**

**B. Believers Have the Reality of Eternal Life (2:25)**

**C. Believers Have the Anointing of the Holy Spirit (2:27)**

**D. Believers Have the Reality of Christ's Presence (2:28)**

**The Tests for Assurance—Behavior**

**1 John 2:29-3:10**

**I. The New Birth (2:29)**

**II. The New Family (3:1-3)**

**A. The Believer's Privilege (3:1)**

**B. The Believer's Discomfort (3:1)**

**C. The Believer's Hope (3:2-3)**

**III. God's Family as Contrasted with Satan's Family (3:4-10)**

**The Tests for Assurance—Doctrine****1 John 3:24-4:6****I. The Holy Spirit (3:24)****II. The Holy Spirit—Contrasted with Evil Spirits (4:1-3)****A. The Command—To Test the Spirits (4:1)****B. The Criterion—For Testing the Spirits (4:2-3)****III. The Holy Spirit's Speakers—Contrasted with Evil Spirits' Speakers (4:4-6)****The Foundation for Assurance—Revisited****1 John 5:4-21****I. Overcomers—Believe in Jesus (5:4-5)****II. Witnesses—Testify to Jesus (5:6-12)****III. Apostates—Turn from Jesus (5:13-18)****IV. Believers—Rely on Jesus (5:18-21)**

## The Foundation of Love and Truth 2 John 1-3

What we believe matters. What we believe does and should affect what we think, what we do, and how we do it. Our understanding of the essential doctrines of the faith are crucial to living out our faith in ways that honor God and fulfill his calling and purpose for our lives. Right thinking then leads us to right activity. No where is the truth of this more evidenced than in the New Testament Letters of 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. These three letters, written in close proximity to each other in time and confronting contemporary issues within the early church that remain contemporary for us today then serve as the foundational pillars for laying out the cornerstone doctrines of the faith. If we will live in a way that pleases God, reflects the wonder who he is, and demonstrates the majesty of what he has done in bringing salvation through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, then an examination of these letters beginning with 2 John is crucial.

Today as we look in 2 John 1-3, we are going to be introduced to the audience of this letter and the foundation of love and truth. At this point, we are dealing with some of the last words that would ever be written under the inspired power of the Holy Spirit and the pen of a man who personally walked with Jesus by his side. John has entered the final steps of his life and he now writes as a man who has been released from captivity on Patmos most likely. He alone remains as a living apostle of the first century and may be writing as early as 35 years after the death of the Lord Jesus or as late as 55 years after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. So what does this sage apostle offer to his readers. What does this spiritual giant have to say to us today? What difference do his words make for us in this place and in this time? I am glad you asked and invite you to look with me at 2 John 1-3 this morning as we stand to honor God's presence upon his word as we discover the foundation of Truth and Love together.

As we begin this letter, we cannot ignore the unique recipient of this work. To the elect lady and her children. There are many who believe that this recipient was a local church that John the Apostle had a special love for. Perhaps the church at Ephesus where he served as pastor for many years. Maybe a church back in Palestine where he had been born. Perhaps one of the historical churches that had remained faithful during the persecution made up this letter's recipient. Others believe that this letter was written to a woman of faith who held a special place in the heart of the Apostle and who had special recognition within the Christian faith along with her children. While men of great wisdom, holy character, and kingdom effectiveness have held fast to both views, I do not believe that we can be

dogmatic in our approach. I believe that we can become so focused on the one who initially received the letter that we can miss the content of the letter entirely. So as we see the work of John's pen before us we recognize that there is a certain degree of mystery with regards to the who of this letter but we also see that there is no mystery in regards to the what of this letter when we place our focus clearly on the contents.

As we turn our attention to the text itself we see John offer to the elect lady and her children a greeting that is saturated with the ideas of truth and love. In these three short verses, John uses the word truth four times and the word love is used as two bookends for his content. So what then does John say in these verses to the elect lady and her children? He declares his love for them through the truth that they have experienced in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John expresses his love for them based on the truth and affirms the love of all those who have experienced the truth for the elect lady and her children as well. This declaration then offers to the Lady and her children an assurance that the relationship that exist within the church is built upon a love that is produced through an experiential life changing encounter with the truth.

So what is this truth? This truth is eternal, this truth is personal, this truth is life changing, this truth is relational, and as we look at the work of John we understand that this truth is the Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the Gospel. For the elect lady and her children the love of John and of all believers is built upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ which is truth and from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ who is his Son. Through God the Father and his eternally existing son the Lord Jesus Christ they have in past, present, and future experienced grace, mercy, and peace.

Consequently, for all believers at all times in all generations this declaration remains with us as well. There is a love that exists among the disciples of Christ that can only be founded upon the eternal purpose of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, the creative work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Sinless Life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the promised return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from the Gospel truth that sets forth the foundations of love within all of the Christian faith we cannot love one another and experience true relationship with God and each other.

Only through the experiential encounter with the truth can we be set free from the power of sin, transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the son God loves, brought into peace with God, adopted into

the family as a child of God, and passed from death in sin to a new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only through this truth may we experience the Grace of God giving us what we could never earn, the mercy of God withholding his judgment that we so rightly deserve because of our sin, and the peace of God which brings about the ceasing of hostilities between us and the divine sovereign of the universe.

Today as we look at John's greeting to the elect lady and her children, we must relate to each other in love and truth through relationship in Jesus Christ. Love and truth are the foundations of right thinking that produces right living. Love for one another is the natural expression of this experiential truth and this truth can only be experienced through relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

How can we experience this relationship? The Apostle John wrote in the Gospel of John 14 that Jesus said he is the way, the truth, and the life no one comes to the father except through him. If we are to experience this relationship we must come to through Jesus on his terms. When Peter preached the first Gospel sermon of the Christian church he was asked, "What must we do to be saved?" His first word was repent. This word repent calls for us to turn from our own way of living. When the Philippian Jailer asked Paul the same question, Paul told him that he must "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." This belief is a trust in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us of our sins and to rule over our life. If you have never come face to face with the reality of your own personal sinfulness and trusted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ to deal with your sin then today the Lord Jesus is calling you to respond to his call and is offering you the invitation to experience the life changing truth only he can provide today.

Secondly, how can we relate to each other in love and truth through our relationship in Jesus Christ? If you have trusted in the Lord Jesus, then you must love as Jesus loved. In these verses John expresses a Christ like love from all who have come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus that is based on the love they have received from the Lord Jesus. We also are to live this love daily. For some this will require repenting of sins that you have been holding on too. For some it will mean forgiving a brother or sister who has brought offense to your life. For some this will require you to mend a relationship that has been broken. For others this will result in a change in activity, spending, giving, and sharing. For some of you it will require you to recognize your need to say I am sorry to others. As you invite the Lord Jesus to reveal to you his love through the truth of who he is and what he has done, he is faithful to reveal this and how it should be expressed

relationally with others in God's family. Today if the Lord Jesus is calling for you to relate to each other in love and truth through relationship in Jesus Christ then today I am inviting you to respond as well.

## The Lifestyle of Truth and Love

### 2 John 4-6

King Duncan shares about a man in history with his church. “I read once about a man, a politician, who talked a great deal about the Almighty's blessings and the Christian confessions that would become pillars of the new government he would create. He appeared to be an earnest man weighed down by historic responsibility. He handed out pious stories to the press, especially to church papers. He showed off his tattered Bible and declared that he drew strength for his great work from it. Scores of people welcomed him as a man of God, a man sent from God. Indeed, Adolf Hitler was a master of outward religiosity, with no inward reality!”

Last week we laid the foundation of truth and love within the Christian life. Truth is found in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and love is the tree which springs forth from this truth from the lives of those who have a true and genuine relationship with God through the Eternal Son. 2 John is a powerful letter by the Apostle of the Lord Jesus as he encourages believers in the face of popular and powerful false teaching. Just as the religiosity of Adolf Hitler whipped many into hysteria and ultimately into destruction, the early false teachings around the church would bring many into apostasy and lead them fully convinced of their salvation into the depths of Hell.

As a result, John continues to emphasize the truth of the Gospels. John places the foundation for living a life that pleases God and results in relationship with him firmly in the testimony of the Gospels. As we move into verses 4-6 today then, we begin to discover the fruit of the tree of love. Just as its roots are founded in truth, the tree must produce appropriate fruit if it is to be trusted and if we are to have confidence in the confession that we make. This morning I invite you to turn with me to 2 John verses 4-6 and let us discover together from these verses the Lifestyle of Truth and Love.

After emphasizing the foundation of truth and love, John commends and instructs on the fruit of truth and love; faithfulness and obedience. In verse 4 John declares his gladness that some of the lady's children are walking in truth. This is not a mark against other of the lady's children but simply an affirmation of what John has seen and heard. This is no different than me walking up to Gary and saying I am glad that Stetson is doing well in school. That is not to say that Kieran isn't doing well, but rather an affirmation of what I have seen and heard.

John's gladness is set ablaze by the news he has heard regarding the lifestyle of truth that is demonstrated by some of the children of this lady. But the question that I must ask is "How does he know?" The phrase walking in the truth is a term for their day to day lifestyle and a lifestyle is a way of living. This is the faithful activity of daily life and the response to life's unexpected circumstances. If you have a sedentary lifestyle then you are faithfully inactive. If you have a grandiose lifestyle, then you are faithfully over the top. So what is a lifestyle that is based in truth?

This is a lifestyle that is producing love for others. John reminds the lady that the lifestyle of truth is really the embodiment of Christ's command to love one another. So the children of this lady is living a life that loves others faithfully.

But love can be such a subjective thing? How can we be sure that these people are genuinely loving others rooted in the truth of who the Lord Jesus is? Can this be accomplished by recitation of a creed? Can this be fulfilled by giving them a test on doctrine? No!!! John defines this love as well in verse 6, "and this is love that we walk according to his commands." Time and again I have defined love as doing what is for the good of the other. Love is action. The evidence of love is not simply a recitation of correct doctrines or even the weekly attendance at the worship meeting. The evidence of love is obedience to the commands that have been given by God through the Scripture and through Jesus Christ.

If we are going to truly embrace a lifestyle of truth and love, then we must understand that truth and love are a lifestyle that is demonstrated by faithfulness and obedience. This past week I was watching some teacher training videos for our adult teachers and the presenter began to discuss what the Gospel is. In this discussion, he pushed the idea that the Gospel is the kingdom of God breaking into the kingdom of this world through the lives of those who have turned from their sins to God through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and submitted their lives to the Lord Jesus' control. As we look at John's words in these verses, that is the exactly of what he is commending in the children of the Lady, instructing in regards to the lady, and saying to us today.

For those who have made a biblical confession of sin and called upon the name of the Lord the root of truth has been laid down. From this root should spring forth a love for others that is then reflected in our faithfulness and obedience to the Lord Jesus and the commands of Scripture. The result should be change. The evidence should be something different. That difference should be evidenced in how we treat others, how we care about those who are less fortunate, how we care about those who are hurting, how

we spend our time, how we spend our money, how we vote, whose leadership we support, how we act at work, how we parent, and every other area of day to day living.

What we care about should be different. What we focus on should be different. What kind of legacy we leave behind should be different. When I was 20 Georgia Football was a big deal. Now that I have come home to being 36 Georgia football doesn't even make a blip on the radar screen of my life.

If you were to drop dead tomorrow what difference have you made in the time you were here? Did you teach your kids how to fish? Great but more importantly did you teach him how to pray? Did you teach your children the importance of hard work? Fantastic but even more importantly did you teach them the importance of worshipping with other believers weekly? Did you teach your kids how to save up for the things that are important? That is awesome but even more importantly did you teach you kids how to experience salvation for eternity through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ?

I was deeply convicted this past week about this very matter as I considered what have I truly worked hardest to teach my children. I was convicted on what do my children see of me when they spend time with me. Have they seen me spend more time in prayer or have them seen my spend more time yelling at other drivers on the road? Have they seen me displaying the love of the Lord Jesus to those that are in need or have them seen and heard me complaining about the state of the world? What have they heard me say? What have they witnessed in my conduct? Could they say that they have seen me walking in the truth?

As we read this passage of Scripture together, we must live a lifestyle of truth and love resulting in faithfulness and obedience. We must turn from those things that would distract us from placing faithfulness and obedience to the commands of the Lord Jesus and the commands of the Scripture above all else. We must trust that the same grace that brought us to salvation is the same grace that enables us to live the lifestyle of truth and love that beats back the false doctrines that so often seek to corrupt the majesty of God, the glory of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, the Sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the work of the church. We must ask ourselves if we have been walking in the truth and if not then we must turn from whatever has drawn us aside and return to the shelter of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am not talking about a show of religiosity or a return to a list of rules. I am talking about a commitment to a relationship that is ordained by God, instituted by the Lord Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to take us from where we

are to where God has created and called us to be. This morning will you make a fresh commitment to living the lifestyle of truth and love resulting in faithfulness and obedience?

## The Standard of Truth

### 2 John 7-9

When I was in kindergarten we had a young lady in my class that was blind. Very quickly in our friendship I discovered something of the utmost importance. I was not to grab her in a effort to lead her. Rather she would take my arm and hold onto me if I was going to lead her where we were to go. In this event she made clear that her job was to hold and my job was to lead.

As we move in 2 John 7-9 today, I want that image to be set in your mind and I invite you to stand with me as we read 2 John 7-9 today and discover The Standard of Truth together.

In the first six verses of 2 John, the Apostle has commended the Elect lady and her children. He has instructed them on the life of love that is rooted in truth and the fruit of a life of love being faith and obedience. Now John turns a corner in his letter to the Elect Lady and begins to instruct her on the destructive nature of false teaching within the church and the standard of truth that the church must hold onto firmly.

John's instruction begins with a statement of fact that many deceivers have gone out into the world with a false declaration regarding the Lord Jesus. They claimed that he was less than a man. The false doctrine of this passage was called Gnosticism and it was a blight upon the early church because of the corruption of the truth that it brought upon those who heard it.

John had a deep hatred of false doctrine. He declares that false doctrine is the antichrist. That through false doctrine the real Christ is opposed, and the true message of Christ is corrupted leaving a broken and helpless message for a world dead in their sins.

John's despise for false doctrine was so strong that one day as he entered the public bath in Ephesus one of the leading teachers of Gnosticism was there to bathe as well. Dressed in only his towel John left the building and declared to his disciples we must leave this place lest the walls fall in because this deceiver is present.

However, do not think that John was afraid of the falsehood. Rather John stated that the Elect Lady and her children must watch themselves that they do not lose what they have worked for. This is not their salvation but rather this is the life of faithfulness and obedience that springs from love rooted in the truth of the Gospel. John is clear that false teaching will result in the loss of God's presence and power within their life and will only leave an empty shell of religion.

As a result, we must hold firmly to the truth as well. The standard of truth is the biblical Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In our era so many false doctrines around the Christ still strive to ruin the Apostles doctrine and the faith of believers. Claims that the Lord Jesus is less than God, claims that he is only a man, claims that he is one of many Gods, claims that he is a created being, claims that he was a progressive homeless hippy, claims that he was a Republican, claims that he was a Democrat, claims that he was a Communist, Claims that he was a capitalist, and so many other claims. Yet compared to the wonder and majesty of who he truly and deeply is revealed to be in Scripture the falsehoods of who the Lord Jesus Christ is are no more viable than if they were the world's strongest flea cascading towards the vibrant heat of the sun.

Do not reject the majesty of the truth for the shell of religion that cannot save, that cannot transform, and that cannot bring eternal life. For the one who has trusted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, you must cling to the truth of the Gospel and refuse to let go. Invest yourself in a study of the Scriptures, invest yourself in times of prayer, invest yourself in times of instruction as a learner, invest yourself as the instructor of your home, seek the wisdom of the Word of God and the power of the Lord Jesus through prayer as you hold firmly and faithfully to the truth that the Bible contains. As my dear blind friend would hold to my arm as I led her through places that were unfamiliar you must hold to the truth of the Gospel with every step that you take.

For the one who has never trusted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only hope of salvation that can be offered is the true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There remains only one name under Heaven by which we must be saved and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Only he can save. The only 200% percent person ever. 100% God, 100% man, virgin born, sinless life, atoning death, victorious resurrection, and the promise of his glorious return. That is the truth of the Gospel and for the one who is willing to turn from their sins and surrender their all to this savior there is salvation in this truth that comes from no other.

Today you do not have to leave this place a slave to sin, but rather you can experience the freedom that only Christ can give. Today you do not have to leave this place bound by the falsehoods of a Christ that is anything less than the God man Jesus Christ. Today you do not have to leave this place with anything short of a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and a right relationship with his church.

## The Expression of Love 2 John 10-13

Today as we conclude our study of 2 John I want to share with you some of the most difficult words for the Christian that we find in all of the New Testament. Over the past few weeks we have spent time focusing on the essential nature of the truth as the root of a life of love and then recognizing that a life of love produces then faithfulness and obedience. Today as we look at 2 John 10-13, I want us to conclude our look at 2 John then with a discovery of love's expression within our lives. If you will I invite you to look with me at 2 John 10-13 today and discover with me the Expression of Love from this passage.

As we read this passage, I suspect that some of you are wondering if I have lost my mind. How in the world do I see an expression of love in these verses? Well I am glad that you have asked. You see love must be rooted within the truth and when we look around us there is in our day much of what John saw in his day. There was tremendous religious tolerance. Everyone seemed to have their own faith and their own gods. Even within the Christian church there was a movement to introduce a plurality of teachings around the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many allowed these false teachings to be shared out of a concern not to offend those who held to these errant views. They were concerned for the feelings and social standing of those who held to a false Gospel and did not wish to bring them societal harm. But love must be rooted in the truth. By allowing these false teachings to go unchecked these false teachers were leading themselves and many within the faith to destruction.

John rejects this notion by stating plainly that the elect lady and her children should not offer the false teacher welcome. This doesn't mean that John was calling for rudeness. He is rejecting the idea of legitimizing their falsehood. He is rejecting the idea that the loving thing to do is to allow the false teacher to teach their falsehood publicly and to be allowed to hold to their falsehoods without challenge. John says that whoever allows that to happen is just as guilty of the damage of the false teachings as the one who is teaching it.

In our day we are often pressured in the same ways. I agree that there are many things within the Scriptures that we do not have a full revelation of and there are many things that may result in reasonable men and women having reasonable disagreements. There are numerous matters that reflect the different ideas of men much more holy, much more faithful, much more intelligent, and much more greatly used of God than I will ever be.

However, on the essential matters of the faith there is an unbroken unity that has traveled down from the time of the Apostles until today that define the boundaries of orthodoxy. And yet these matters remain the areas which often result in division and false teachings.

The universal sinfulness of humanity and his earned damnation at the judgment seat of God is attacked by the idea that “I believe people are basically good.” The eternality of the Lord Jesus Christ is assailed by the idea that there was ever a point when the Lord Jesus Christ did not exist and was created. The humanity of Christ is rejected by the concept that in his incarnation Christ was anything less than a real man. The sinless life of the Lord Jesus and his atoning death is replaced with “Jesus was a great teacher or a great prophet.” The literal physical resurrection is taught as a spiritual resurrection that leaves Jesus still buried. The exclusivity of the person and work of the Lord Jesus for salvation is substituted with “All roads lead to God.” Obedience to the command to be baptized is replaced with the idea that making your public declaration of faith in the Lord Jesus is an optional matter. The essential nature of a right relationship with the local church is replaced with the false dichotomy of “You don’t have to go to church to go to Heaven.”

The false teachings of our day include all of these and then false teachings around marriage, relationships, how we are to treat each other, the unity of the church, the authority of our leaders, and any other number of matters. Each false doctrine then contains the root to kill the life of love and the genuine fruit that it produces. As a result, the genuine expression of love for the believer that must be undertaken is to fight for the truth of the Gospel.

The most loving thing that we can do is to correct the errant teachings around the Gospel that lead people astray. Why? Because as false Christ cannot save. A Christ that is formed and fashioned in an untrue image is incapable of accomplishing that which only the true Christ can do. We must know the truth of the Gospel and we must be willing to contend with false teachers and false teachings about the Gospel. We must protect our brothers and sisters in Christ from the false doctrines that center around the Christ by knowing and teaching the biblical doctrines that are found only in the Christ. Doctrines of man’s sinfulness, God’s grace, Christ’s person and work, and man’s salvation are firmly rooted and understood properly only in the true doctrine of the Gospel and we must know them.

Often the teachings are close and often they are popular. Nevertheless we must hold firm and fast to the truth that is the great equalizer in the debate.

November 5, 1994 is a day that lives in the chronicles of my mind. On this day one of the greatest sporting events in the history of my life took place live and in living color on HBO. In one corner stood a young fast strong champion named Michael Moore and in the other stood a man nearly 45 years of age named George Foreman. On this night Foreman looked to become the oldest man ever to win a major heavyweight boxing championship. As the fight began Moore used his speed and youth to keep after Foreman and by the 10<sup>th</sup> round had built an impressive lead in points. He had hit Foreman with everything he had and the old man was certainly reeling. Moore's trainer, Teddy Atlas could be heard in the corner screaming at Moore to just stay away from Foreman. Atlas had figured out what Foreman already knew.

George Foreman realized that he could not out box Moore. He recognized that he was too old and too big to dance with the kid all night long. So Foreman simply used a jab with his left hand through out the night to set up for one big right that he felt could drop Moore. As the 10th round started Foreman hit Moore with a hard crushing shot to the body that slowed Moore down tremendously. Then he worked to pat at Moore with that left jab. As the round moved towards its conclusion, Foreman used that left jab to move Moore right into place and then delivered that crushing right hand he had been preparing sending Moore to the ground and making George Foreman the World Heavyweight champion.

Just as George Foreman understood the truth of the power in his right hand, we must understand the power of the truth of the Gospel in the face of falsehood and we must be willing to fight for the truth of the Gospel. We cannot truly love a person that we allow to wander uncontested in their false teaching. The threat of losing a friendship is not nearly grave enough for us to allow someone to enter eternity separated from the truth of the Gospel. True love is to strive to prevent that person from falling headlong into eternity grasping to the false hope of a false Gospel.

However, even more importantly than having simply an intellectual knowledge of the truth we must have an experiential knowledge of the truth. The expression of love is not made by the man who knows intellectually the truth of the Gospel as superior to all other philosophical systems but rather it is made by the person who has experienced the life changing work of the Gospel upon their own life. If you have never experienced the life changing work of the Gospel in your life, then today I am inviting you to lay the foundation of truth for your life today.

Today if you have been flirting with falsehood around the Gospel, then I am inviting you to turn from this wickedness and return to the truth

that set you free. Today I am calling each of us to make a fresh commitment to learning the truth of the Gospel, to teaching the truth of the Gospel, to sharing the truth of the Gospel, and to fight for the truth of the Gospel as you renew your commitment to the Lord Jesus and to his life changing work in our life, home, work place, neighborhood, and community.

Sermons of 3 John  
Lessons on Love in Relationship  
3 John 1, 4, and 13-14

Last week we concluded our look at the New Testament Letter of 2 John as we ultimately discovered the essential role the truth of the Gospel plays in producing a life that loves others and bears the fruit of faithfulness and obedience. If you missed any part of that series, I want to encourage you to watch the sermon or sermons you missed on our Facebook page or on our YouTube channel.

Thus having completed our look at 2 John, I want us to begin today an examination of the New Testament Letter 3 John. Much like 2 John this is a personal letter written by the aged Apostle near the end of his life and very well may have been the last book of the New Testament ever written. In this work John is sharing with his friend Gaius on some important matters regarding Gaius's personal walk with Christ, some matters that were taking place within the church, and some matters that relate to the further work of the Christian mission.

Most likely this letter was delivered at the same time as 2 John and in many ways serves as a companion piece to 2 John. While the primary emphasis of 2 John was a truth that produces love, the primary emphasis of 3 John is the Love that truth produces. As a result, we are going to take the next four Sundays and focus ourselves on this the shortest book in the New Testament as we discover the Lessons on Love that the Apostle John sought to share with the early church and that today the Lord Jesus desires for our church to learn as well.

If you will please stand with me as we read the Letter of 3 John this morning.

Henry Ford said, "My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me." As we begin to investigate the Lesson of Love that are revealed in this letter of 3 John, I want us to begin with a discovery of the Lessons of Love in Relationship. John as an elder and a warrior of the faith has a great love and appreciation for his friend Gaius. This love then seeks to bring out the best in his friend as Gaius continues to live a life that pleases the Lord Jesus Christ. From the personal exchanges of John in this letter, we then can see the lessons of love in relationship and discover the wonder of this love for our lives today. As we look at a selective group of verses within this letter, I want us to discover three answers to this question, "How is love expressed in our relationships with others?"

As we look in verse one we see John express his love for Gaius in the truth. For John his relationship with Gaius began and progressed because of

there relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, John sought to love Gaius the way Jesus loved John. This love would seek to move each man further down the path of their walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. This love would require times of instruction, encouragement, rebuke, redirection, and at all times a seeking to help both men grow to look more like Jesus Christ.

For us as well, true love is rooted in the truth of the Gospel. We must also be willing to love others the way that Jesus has loved us. That means for our friends and family that do not yet know the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to love them by praying for their salvation, by inviting them to hear the message of the Gospel in your Bible study and at church, and by sharing the message of the Gospel personally with them. For our brothers and sisters that are in Christ, we must seek to move them and ourselves further down the path of conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. That will require genuine and authentic relationships, that will require time spent with each other, that will require honest conversation, and that will require a willingness both to speak and to hear. If you are to truly express love in the relationship that you have, then you must root that love in the truth of the Gospel.

Following his declaration of love, John expresses his love towards Gaius in many ways within the letter. John prays for Gaius, he is glad for news of Gaius, he takes pride in Gaius faithfulness, he commends Gaius in those things that he is doing well in, he offers instruction to Gaius regarding difficult matters, he declares his desire to spend time with Gaius, and he wishes Gaius peace.

We must also root our love in the truth and then we must realize that love is expressed in many ways within our relationship.

One of the crucial skills that I teach when I do pre-marital and marital counseling is what I call learning to look for love. Most people tend to focus on the negatives in their life. As a result, they fail to properly recognize when others are attempting to show them love and they fail to properly react when opportunities to show love towards others are presented to them. In these short verses, we see John express love in at least seven specific ways. As you go about your daily life how are you striving to express your love for others? How are others striving to express their love for you? Could that co-worker that always seems to be on your case actually be expressing love to you by helping you accomplish your job properly and thus avoiding reprimand? Could your wife benefit from your willingness to help her in the kitchen with dinner rather than your complaining about how long it is taking to cook dinner? Might your pastor, deacon, or Bible study leader be

showing you love when they text you during the week to see how you are doing and asking how they can pray for you rather than just trying to make you feel guilty for missing Sunday?

Within our relationships love can be and often is expressed in a myriad of ways. We must be actively seeking to identify the love that others are showing and we must be intentionally seeking to express our love towards others.

At the core of love's expression in our relationships, John demonstrates that true love desires what is best for Gaius. John could have simply said that Gaius is doing well enough. I don't have to take the time to write this letter. John could have been self serving in writing this letter asking Gaius to simply do things that would benefit John. Yet in each of John's words, he offers to Gaius a path to what is best. John encourages Gaius to continue forward in what he is doing well and he encourages him to take the proper steps in areas where he may be drawing back. John does not encourage Gaius to advocate on John's behalf nor does he afford him the opportunity to advance himself through his relationship with John. Rather he offers to Gaius the opportunity to improve even if another path would benefit John more.

So in our relationships true love will also be expressed by desiring what is best for the other. Henry Ford saw friendship in terms of what was best for him. As believers we are called to see friendship through the lens of what is best for our friend. That means at times you will have to say hard things to your friend to help them avoid that which will destroy them. That means at times it will cost you personally, professionally, emotionally, and physically to bring about the best for your friend. Yet John states it clearly in verse 4, "I have no greater joy than this; to hear my children are walking in the truth."

The greatest joy that I can have as a pastor, that you can have as a friend is to see those you are in relationship with walking in the truth of the Gospel as they grow towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

How is love expressed in our relationships? First true love is rooted in the Truth of the Gospel. Second love is expressed in many ways. Finally love desires what is best for the other. As Jesus prepared for his death, the Apostle John was the only Gospel writer to record these words from the savior. In the New Testament book of John chapter 13:34-35 Jesus says, "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." As we go about our day to day lives, we are commanded by our Lord to express this love faithfully in all of

our relationships and as we do the power of the Gospel's truth will be recognized by those we encounter.

## Lessons on Love in Actions 3 John 2-8

A man wrote to READER'S DIGEST and here is what he said:

"My mother has always treated me like her baby, no matter what my age. After turning 30, I purchased a computer and learned to use it. Thinking I'd impress her with my skill and maturity, I sent her a well-written letter, complete with computer graphics, borders and an elaborate typeface.

"I phoned to ask what she thought of the letter. 'It's lovely, dear,' she replied. 'I have it hanging on the refrigerator for all the neighbors to see.'"

Love is not simply the expression of a word, but rather love is illustrated by action. For the one who has trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, love should be demonstrated through certain activities that reflect to whom we belong and the work that has been accomplished within our life. As we look at 3 John 2-8 today, I want you to notice the activity of Gaius that John commends and I want us to discover three distinctive answers to the question "How Is Love Expressed In Our Actions Towards Others" as we discover the Lessons on Love in our Actions today. If you will please stand as we honor God's presence upon his word and read the 3 Letter of John today.

When we look at John's word's to Gaius we see him commend his dear friend for a love that is producing evidence of Christlikeness. John expresses his gladness that the brothers had told him of Gaius walking in the truth. These brothers were likely traveling ministers who would move through a region teaching and strengthening the local congregations. At times they may have been sent by an apostle to work with a church in a specific area of concern and at other times they were sent out from their home congregation simply as a way to help their other churches and to maintain both fellowship and continuity of message and ministry. We are not sure how these brothers came to Gaius but what we are sure of is that his life was a testimony of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in Him to those brothers.

In the same manner, true love is producing evidence of Christlikeness in our lives today as well. If we are rooted in the truth and the truth is producing love within us then that love will give evidence of our relationship to Christ in what we do. We will be seen in our actions towards others as Christlike. Jesus' saw the people hungry and he fed them, he saw them in need for a shepherd and he led them, he saw them bound by the oppression of the Pharisees legalism and he freed them. We also will

demonstrate Christlikeness through feeding those who are hungry, leading those who are wandering, and freeing those who are bound. This a couple weeks ago one of our brothers called me to see if I knew anyone looking for a job he had a guy needing to hire someone and he wanted to know if any of our brothers and sisters within the church were need work. That is Christlikeness in action. That comes from the depths of true love that is rooted in the truth of who Jesus is and what the Lord Jesus has done.

John also commends Gaius for supporting the work of ministry faithfully where he lived. John commends Gaius by expressing his faithfulness in what he did for those men who had come while they were in his community. This work of love was testified to by those men when they returned to John and the local church John was a part of. His faithful giving to the work of ministry locally was a testimony of the true love within him and his commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ who had saved him.

How then is love expressed in our actions towards others? First true love is producing evidence of Christlikeness and secondly true love is supporting faithfully for the work of ministry in our local context. What we invest our time, efforts, energy, talents, and money into are what is truly important to us. Why do we invest so much of ourselves into our children? They are important to us. Why do we invest so much of ourselves into our jobs? Our jobs are important to us. Why should we invest so much of ourselves into the ministry of the local church? The work of ministry should be important to us also.

The church locally is the means that God has provided for the disciple-making work of his kingdom. In Riverton, Wyoming the Bible believing, Gospel sharing, disciple-making work of God is to be accomplished through churches that are Bible believing, Gospel sharing, and Disciple-making. The means that God has provided the local church to accomplish that task is each and every one of us. If we truly love the Christ that saved us and if we truly love the lost who are yet unreached around us, then love compels us to faithfully support the work of ministry in our local church. We must serve, we must give, we must go, and we must do so faithfully.

John then doesn't stop with Gaius support of the brothers on a local level, but he also commends Gaius once more because of his love in providing generously for the work of missions through the brothers. John says, You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. This phrase doesn't mean that John is commanding him to do so, but rather is an encouragement for him to continuing doing so. Gaius did not

simply show love to these men in their time at his church, but he provided for them financially as they left his church and continued their work.

Thus we answer the question, “How is love expressed in our actions to others?” First true love is producing evidence of Christlikeness, second true love is supporting faithfully the work of ministry in our local context, and third true love is providing generously for the work of missions to those we cannot personally reach. The charge to make disciples of the world cannot be done by each of us on a personal level. I will not likely ever go to Africa, Asia, South America, or Australia. But my dollars can go where my body cannot and my giving can help those who are going where I physically will not.

As a church, 13 cent out of every dollar that you give to our general offering leaves this church and goes to further the work of missions across Wyoming, the United States, and the World. Beyond that we collect several special offerings each year specifically for the purpose of furthering our commitment to the sharing of the Gospel through the mission work of others. In this we do well. In this we allow our love for a world that is lost in its sin to hear the message of the Gospel, we strengthen new believers in all parts of the world through our giving by providing them with missionaries and resources that are crucial for the work of making disciples in their local context, and we engage people who have never heard the Gospel with the Gospel for the first time.

How is love expressed in our actions towards others? True love is producing evidence of Christlikeness in our actions towards others. True love is supporting faithfully the work of ministry in our own local context. True love is providing generously for the work of missions where we physically cannot go.

The question then for each of us to answer today is am I expressing love in my actions towards others in these ways?

## Lessons on Love in Leadership

### 3 John 9-10

The young preacher had just announced to his congregation that he was requesting the dissolution of the pastoral relationship in order to accept another call. He was standing at the door after the service and greeting people, as preachers are wont to do, when one of the elderly saints approached him, her eyes swimming with tears. She sobbed, "Oh pastor, I'm so sorry you've decided to leave. Things will never be the same again."

The young man was flattered, but was equal to the situation and took her hands in his and most benevolently replied, "Bless you, dear lady, but I am sure that God will send you a new pastor even better than I." She choked back a sob and was heard to say, "That's what they all say, but they keep getting worse and worse!"

This moment of levity sets the stage for the tension of John's letter. In this letter we have learned the lessons on love in relationship and we have learned the lessons on love in action. Now as we move into verses 9 and 10 we are going to discover the lessons on love in leadership and seek to answer the question, how is love expressed in our leadership of others. If you will please stand to honor God's presence upon his word as we read the third letter of John together.

In verses 9 and 10 we are introduced to a character named Diotrephes. All that we know of this person is found in this letter and yet in this letter we learn quite a bit. John shares with Gaius some crucial insights about expressing love as a leader through his words regarding Diotrephes.

When we look at verse nine we see that Diotrephes is a leader within the church that wants to be the main attraction. John describes him as a person that loves to have first place among the church. In my pastoral ministry class in college this person would carry a number of titles. Perhaps he was the political pastor who sought to lead the church to accomplish his own ends. Maybe he was the Chief Raisin who wished to be in charge of the bunch. No matter what he was called in his day, the heart of this leader was the same, his leadership was about him and his ego. The church, its work, its mission, its ministries, its programs, and its functions were about him.

As a result his ego he would not receive the missionaries that came from the Apostle or from his sister churches. Whether this was to hide false teaching, to keep the congregation ignorant of what was going on in other places, or for fear that one of the brothers may garner more respect than himself he would not allow them into the church. He was so bold that he would even slander the Apostles and the other leaders who would send these brothers to the church and apparently had enough influence that if other

church members did not do what he wanted he would have them kicked out of the church.

Now for us that is a bad situation, but for them it would be even worse. Many of these believers had lost homes, family, jobs, business, and opportunities because of the Lord Jesus Christ. The social network that existed for the believers was the local church and to be removed from that fellowship was to live as a total outcast from society.

In Diotrephes we had a man that lived with a self centered leadership and a bully mentality in how he dealt with those who followed his lead. Thankfully for us from what John has written in these verses we can now answer the question, “How is love expressed in our leadership of others?”

First let me make this clear, each of you is a leader. Whether you lead others through your family, your job, your neighborhood, your community involvement, or any other number of areas you are a leader of others and you influence those around you for better or for worse. Whether you have an official title of leadership within your work place or your church you remain a leader and as a result, each of us should learn the lessons on love in leadership.

Secondly, these lessons on leadership may be practical for all leaders but they are exclusively shared with Christian leaders. Remember love rooted in the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who he is and what he has done has changed us from a self-centered life to a God centered life. The building of our own personal kingdoms has been surrendered to the building of God’s kingdom because of the sin forgiving, soul saving, relationship with God restoring work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are here and you have never trusted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and the restoring of your relationship with God then today my plea is that you will be changed by the Lord Jesus.

So with that foundation we then look at verse 9 and begin to answer the question how is love expressed in our leadership of others? First true love puts the benefits of others before ourselves. Diotrephes is reprimanded because his general attitude of leadership was to put himself first rather than those he had been called to lead. We must put the benefit of others before ourselves if we are truly going to love those we are leading.

Leadership is not about your ego. Leadership is about developing those that you are leading into what God has created them to be. Leadership is not about getting yourself to the top. Leadership is about guiding others from where they are to where God has called them to be. There is no room for selfish ambition in the life of the leader.

As parents, as employers, as co-workers, as a family member, and as a neighbor our influence of those around us should push them to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ. My desire is not to raise my children to provide a good living for me in my retirement. My desire is to raise my children to be everything that God has created and called them to be. That may require me to sacrifice my child to the mission field or to see my child wander their own path in rebellion to God. My hope is for my children to have a peaceful and successful life, but that cannot be my objective in leading them. That objective is best for my conscience, but it is not best for them. Only as my children grow into all that God has created and called them to be will they truly experience the best life that they can have even if it is hard, difficult, persecuted, filled with suffering, and marked by poverty and loss. In each decision that I make in leading my children the motivation must be is this what is best based on God's will and instruction. In every area of leadership within our lives this motivation must be the driving force as we express true love by seeking the benefit of others.

Not only does true love put the benefit of others before the benefit of ourselves, but true love maintains faithful and honest accountability. We do not lead in a vacuum. We are all susceptible to being wrong. As a result, we need accountability. John states that he would hold Diotrephes accountable for his actions.

Accountability in the life of the leader is a good thing. Leaders can often develop tunnel vision or they can begin to assess their opinions and ideas to highly. Accountability helps us keep the benefit of our followers in the forefront of our thinking. My wife and I partner to raise our children. We take advice from our parents and from other parents as well. I meet with our deacons, our church council, and our staff as a means of maintaining accountability for the work God has called us to as a church. I meet with committees as a way to maintain accountability for the organization of our church. We have regular business meetings to provide opportunities to ask questions, get answers, review what is being suggested, and to help navigate change. I meet with other pastors and other church leaders as well so that we do not fail those we have been called to lead in the area of accountability.

Accountability comes through faithfulness to your relationship. Each week we focus on living out our relationship with Christ as men, husbands, and fathers in our men's Bible study. Twice a month our ladies learn about living in Christ through their ladies Bible studies. We share our lives together and build accountability with each other and the Scriptures through Sunday school and through corporate worship. We spend time in service together. We reach out to our community together. As we spend this time

with each other we build relationships that allow those around us to speak truth into our lives.

Each of us must intentionally develop accountability. If we truly love those we lead, then we must remember the fallibility of our own nature and seek the wisdom and guidance of others to help us stay on the correct course. This is one of the main purposes of the local church. This family provides us with a wealth of knowledge and experience to draw our accountability from and if we truly love those that we lead we will build relationships that are genuine and honest enough to hold us accountable for our leadership.

Finally, we see in verse 10 Diotrephes using his leadership to keep others from welcoming the missionaries by expelling them from the church. This reprimand reveals to us then that we express love in leadership when we seek to set others free in their service. The selfish leader desire to run everything and to have everything done his way. True love in leadership seeks to set others free to serve as God has called and gifted them.

Love desires to see others grow into all that God desires for them to be and that means that leaders must love their followers enough to let them be who God created them to be. Your children will not be just like you. Your co-workers are not going to be just like you. Your Sunday school teacher is not going to be just like you. Your committee members are not going to be just like you. They are growing to be just like the person God created them to be and that means that we must allow them to freely express that as they grow.

When the Kung Fu Panda was called upon to teach others Kung Fu, he first sought to teach people to be like himself. What he soon discovered was that true teaching helped them become who they were created to be. In the same way the leader who truly loves their followers will lead them to freely exercise the talents, gifts, abilities, and skills that God has wired into them to accomplish the work that he has prepared that only they can accomplish.

Everyone has value. Everyone has been uniquely gifted and crafted by the hand of a perfect, eternal, all-wise, all-knowing, and all powerful God. God has then placed leaders to lead everyone and he has placed everyone in a place where they are leaders.

As a result of what God has done in us through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are responsible to love those that we lead and to express that love by putting them above ourselves, by maintaining faithful and honest accountability around our lives, and setting others free to be all that God has created them to be. The relationship of the leader to those that

are being led is a relationship of love and that relationship truly starts with our relationship to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Lessons on Love in Daily Life

### 3 John 11-12

Today we will close our look at 3 John as we bring to a end our examination of what is most likely the last words written from the inspired pen of an apostle. John has spent his letters of Second and Third John emphasizing roles of truth and love. In Second John we discovered the Truth that produces love and in Third John we have found the Love that Truth Produces. As John closes this letter he offers words of instruction and a commendation that is relevant and practical for each of us today as we strive to live out the love that is rooted in the truth of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will then, I invite you to stand with me as we look at the letter of 3 John today and read this letter from the Scriptures together.

A wise mother once shared this statement with her son: “Your children pay more attention to what you do than to what you say.” As John brings his letter to an end we read verses 11-12, and in these verses he offers similar wisdom to Gaius his dear friend. Having concluded his condemnation of the church leader Diotrefes for his selfish leadership, John instructs his dear friend not to imitate what is evil but what is good because how we act reflects who we truly belong too. Then John offers Demetrius as an example of one who embodies this goodness and reflects a true love that is rooted in the truth.

We do not know who Demetrius is. There is much speculation but at a minimum we can agree that he was a member of the church who embodied the imitation of that which is good and rejection of that which is evil. As a result his testimony is affirmed by his actions and supported by others.

So as we look at these two verses I want to answer the question: “How is love expressed in our Daily Living?” From John’s instruction and his commendation this text offers us a three faceted answer to that question. The first facet is that true love rejects what is evil.

The marvelous work of salvation is not simply that you get to go to Heaven when you die. For so long Heaven has been held out as the carrot of conversion, but nowhere in the Scriptures do we see that idea as motivation for salvation nor do we see that as the object of the Lord Jesus’ life and work. What the Scriptures reveal is that prior to a personal work of the Lord Jesus within the heart and life of the individual, we are slaves to our sinfulness. We run to sin. We choose to sin. We love our sin. The Apostle Paul writing in Titus 3:3 describes the unbeliever as one that was, “once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another.” But through the

message of the Gospel and faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ we have been given freedom from our slavery to sin. John writes in John 8:36, "He who the son has set free is free indeed." The freedom of Christ has released us from the bondage of slavery and the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 5:1, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free, stand firm then and do not let yourselves be burdened again with the yoke of slavery."

Through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been set free from slavery to sin and you do not have to do what is evil. Because of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, you can be brought into right relationship to God. You have the ability to surrender yourself totally to the Lord Jesus. You have the opportunity to experience the continual filling and refilling of the Holy Spirit within your life. You do not have to live in bondage to your sins any longer because of what God has done in Christ Jesus and if you have trusted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins then you are commanded by the Word of God not to imitate that which is evil.

Because of the Lord Jesus Christ dishonesty, gossip, slander, malice, unfaithfulness, misplaced priorities, unholiness, unrighteousness, selfishness, lust, pride, foul language, course joking, harmful chemical dependency, and insecurity should be destroyed and continue being destroyed daily within our lives. Those things reflect the carnality of this world and a return to the slavery Christ has set us free from. Do not imitate what is evil. Cast your conduct upon the grace of God and trust in the power of his Holy Spirit working within your life to keep you from the imitation of those things that have no place in the life of the believer. True love rejects what is evil.

The second facet of our answer then is that true love imitates what is good. Goodness is not relative. What is good has been revealed by God through the Scriptures. We are not called to create our own standards or to invent our own truths. We are not able to use our own feelings as the basis of authority regarding what is true. God knows this and as a result he has provided us with the standard of truth through the Scriptures to reveal what the imitation of good is.

You see the truth of the Lord Jesus within your life did not just set you free from slavery to sin but also empowered you to do that which is good through the Holy Spirit within your life. Love rooted in truth imitates what is good based on God's word. The root of truth enables us to live a life that embodies what is good as it produces a Christ-like love within us. This love then reflects a change of character towards that which is good. The

Apostle Paul calls for us in Colossians 3 to, “Put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” As our character is changed our external activity should change also, The New Testament calls for us to forgive others, to walk in obedience to the Lord, and to love God above all else and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We are called to be faithful to our spouses and to deal faithfully with our children. We are called to love and support our local church, to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to seek those that are lost in their sins and offer them the hope of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You cannot live this out in your own strength and when we fail to realize that we often find ourselves disappointed, disillusioned, and overwhelmed. Rather we must trust in the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to mold us and shape us as we continually bring our sinfulness in confession to the Lord Jesus Christ. True love rejects what is evil and true love imitates what is good.

The third facet then of our answer today is that true love is faithful to the Gospel and to others. Perhaps the greatest detriment to the work of the Lord Jesus in the life of a person is to live in a way that unfaithful to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. When John commends Demetrius he states he has a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself. Demetrius’ life reflected the truth of the Gospel and as a result the Gospel testified of its power in Demetrius’ life.

For so many we believe that because we have prayed a prayer, attended church, put money in the offering plate, served on a committee, taught a class, or any other number of things we have experienced salvation. However, the true evidence of salvation is that our life has been changed because of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our motivations have been changed, our priorities have been changed, our goals have been changed, our behavior has been changed, and our heart has been changed.

The Gospel is a Gospel of forgiveness of sins, freedom from sin, a new life in Christ, right relationship with God, adoption into God’s family, peace with God, and brotherhood with Christ and his church. But before the Gospel is any of those things the Gospel is a Gospel of repentance of sin. A turning from who we were to God and a trusting in the person and work of Christ to bring about forgiveness and to bring us into all those other aspects of his kingdom. The Gospel is a message of self denial to follow the Lord Jesus in whatever way he chooses to lead us.

This faithfulness to the Gospel results in our faithfulness to others. Because we believe that the wages of man’s sin is death and eternal separation from God’s goodness and mercy to experience only his wrath and

judgment in Hell, the Gospel compels us to be faithful to those around us. We are missionaries of the Lord Jesus to our family, our neighborhoods, our work places, and our friendships. We cannot simply turn a blind eye to the plight of others. We cannot allow the offenses brought against us by those lost in their sins to hold us back. True love compels us to live out the truth of the Gospel faithfully among others. True love compels us to look at our friends and family and warn them of the consequence of their sin and share with them the hope of the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. True love is faithful to the Gospel and to others.

How is love expressed in our daily life? True love rejects what is evil. True love imitates what is good. True love is faithful to the Gospel and to others.