

## **WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S LOVE AND TRUTH IN FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM AFTER BELIEVING ON JESUS**

When we dive into John's three epistles, it is important for us to first understand to whom he is writing and the purpose for which he is writing. This is important in order to understand the literary style of writing he uses throughout these epistles. Four key words that are continuously repeated are: believe, love, light, and truth. He consistently uses these terms to give his recipients the assurance that they are saved and have eternal life.

It is not enough for anyone to begin reading John's epistles with the mindset of mental belief and verbal confession, apart from a lifestyle that produces fruit contrary to that belief and confession. To prove their authenticity, John uses these terms in conjunction to the believer's assurance of salvation in Christ and eternal life. The literary style of 1 John is based on his audience.

He makes his address in 1 John 2:12–14 as follows:

Verse 12 and 14a: I write to you dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name, and you know the Father

Verse 13a and 14b: I write to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning

Verse 13b and 14c: I write to you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one

All such are whom John the elder (the aged) calls "My little/dear children" (2:1a), of whom are all already in Christ at the time of his writing (1 John 5:1). It is clear that his main purpose for writing was to provide complete confidence and assurance of Christians having eternal life because they believe on Jesus that he was the Son of God (1 John 5:13).

Our revisiting of the four terms covered earlier: believe, love, light, and truth – are all connected in John's overall message, along with their salvation experience because they are in Christ. These four terms lay out the

groundwork for our deep dive into this powerful epistle. John uses the compare and contrast method to make his point. He identifies **those who are** and **those who are not**.

He makes this declaration in 1 John 3:9-10 as follows:

Verse 9: No one who is born of God will continue to sin. Why not? Because God's seed [life] remains [abides] in them, and they cannot go on sinning because they have been born of God.

Verse 10: This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are.

How do we know? Because anyone who does not do what is right [practices sin] is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister [hatred or unforgiveness]

John demonstrates that a mental belief in the truth of Scripture that testify of Christ, a verbal confession of love, a knowledge of truth, and a verbal confession to be a Christian does not mean that a person has been born again. The NIV's rendition of the verse, "does not continue to sin" is also translated as "practice" in other English translations which means the one who does not actively practice sin

Another clear reading of the text is the NASB's rendition, that: "No one who has been born of God practices sin." Additionally, the term "practices," as used by a majority of other translations do not use this term say "does not continue in." In both of these cases, the Greek word being translated in the passage is a Third Person Singular verb that means "to manufacture, construct, act, cause, to do, or to make."

When translated and parsed, it is the Present Active Indicative of ποιεῖ (poiei). It defines a person's current state (present tense), the person doing the action (active voice), and the person's action is an objective fact and reality of the situation and is certain (indicative), and their action continues or progresses from the person's present into the future. [1]

The assurance of salvation and eternal life relies on all four connected key words that John keeps repeating. We learn in hermeneutics that, when, a word is repeated over and over in a verse, chapter, or book, it warrants our utmost attention. I would add that this is a similar technique used in modern writing where a writer would underline or bold-font a word (or words) throughout their writing.

Individual words have meaning, and those, based on the author's intent. In other words, we are to take notice to what the Lord is saying to us through the speaker or writer when it comes to the repetitive use of words. Words, because of their continual usage in a passage or book, will often drive the main idea of the text to our attention.

First, his use of the word, believe, is consistent with other NT Greek usages of the word as faith in connection with Christ. Here, faith as it is often used synonymously with the term believe, comes from the Greek word πίστις (*pistis*) which simply means trust. Both believe and trust carries power that seizes upon the human soul as far as Jesus is concerned. This meaning throughout the NT rules out any prerogatives of only believing something mentally in the absence of a real-life transformation (1 John 5:18). [2]

For real/true Christians, the most certain authentic indicator of a person's faith in Christ is based on how they live. Jesus told them "You will know them by their fruits" (by the works they produce), Matt 7:16. Christians (followers of Christ) can know with certainty that they have eternal life because they have faith in the only one who can grant it, Jesus Christ. Mental belief and verbal confession are not enough. Devils even do as much yet they even tremble (see James 2:19).

Secondly, his use of the word love is also consistent with other usages of it in NT Greek in connection to Christ. It should not be confused with an emotion or sentiment, but as a concrete self-giving action. It is revealed by example that "God sent His Son into the world" (1 John 4:9). And therefore, love for God is inseparable from obedience, truth, and sacrificial love for others. For John, to love as Christ loved is to participate in the very life of God,

demonstrating that one truly “abides” in Him rather than merely professing to be a Christian.

John’s use of the word is a personal reflection back on the very words Jesus taught them that love is the greatest commandment – love of God and love of neighbor (Matt 22:36–40; John 13:34–35). One’s love of God and love of neighbor are theologically and existentially unified. Love flows from God, is revealed in Christ, is commanded to believers, and is manifested through concrete love for others. To love God truly is to love one’s neighbor faithfully. But to fail in the latter negates the former.

The Greek New Testament has four words that define the word love: *eros* (romantic love), *storge* (affectionate love between parent and child), *philos* (mutual love between friends), and *agape* (unconditional love). Regarding *eros*, Wuest says it is not used in the NT but it is used in early Christian writings. [3] The word defining unconditional love, ἀγάπην. is what he chose to use throughout the epistle exhorting Christians to emulate God’s love for them.

It was not uncommon for a Jew like John to make use of Hebrew parallelism as seen below:

1 John 4:16–19:

- A– And so, we know and rely on the love God has for us.
- B– God is love.
- C– Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.
- D– This is how love is made complete among us so that
- E– We will have confidence on the day of judgment
- E– In this world, we are like Jesus.
- D– No fear in love but perfect love drives out fear
- C– Because fear has to do with punishment.
- B– The one who fears is not made perfect in love.
- A– We love because he first loved us

As exemplified above, John's use of Hebrew synonymous parallelism is a literary structure involving the repetition of a same idea, representing it in another way. [4] Because of the fact that God is love, he trickles this attribute down to people as a fruit of the Holy Spirit. And because of the fact that God is eternal, He gives life-eternal to Christians that emulate His true character and nature. Those who possess this attribute of God also has the evidence of eternal life abiding in them.

And conclusively, "we know and rely on the love God has for us," and therefore "we love because he first loved us." For John, this is the kind of love that is not generated by human effort or moral resolve. It flows from God's prior, gracious initiative in Christ. Because God has acted first in love by sending Christ, believers are grounded in His assurance and compelled toward faithful obedience to Him.

Lastly, for John, for Christians to abide in God is to abide in love, and this abiding expresses itself inwardly and outwardly in the concrete love for others, revealing that God's love has truly taken root in us. Even as belief and faith are not a mere mental assent or verbal professions, so too love, light, and truth are not abstract ideas but lived out expressions of reality in action.

For one to claim belief (faith) without obedience, love without sacrificial action, or truth without walking in the light is to misunderstand their very nature, and thereby foreign to Scripture. For John, authentic faith is embodied, love is practiced, light is walked in, and truth is lived before God and others. Apart from this, there is no other way to explain or express God's will.

John's final two words is light and truth. Those who walk in the light walk in truth. And those who walk in truth are walking in the light. Where are truth and light? The answer is, Jesus. For John, this will guarantee the believer of eternal life because in God Himself is light (1 John 1:5), and Christ alone is the truth (John 14:6). And to love one another is walking in the light. And when the believers are walking in the light, they are in fellowship with God and He with them; and no darkness in them because they are walking in the light and have eternal life.

The message of the apostles is the truth of Christ's teaching. Truth is distinguished from falsehood, whereas falsehood is the denial that Jesus was a real genuine human being. It is by this method of God's final defeat of all fallen angels, and the work that sealed their final doom, and provided the only way of escape for human beings from God's wrath to come.

Any person that denies Jesus was a human being that died on the cross of sins has an evil spirit manifesting in them as the antichrist. It is the spirit of antichrist behind all teachings and religions that deny that Christ and purports another way to God in addition to Christ or apart from Christ. In Matthew 7:15–19, Jesus warned that false prophets would appear after his ascension to heaven and would attempt to distort the Gospel.

In 2 Peter 2:1, the apostle Peter equated the false teachers under the NT era with the false prophets in the OT era. These false teachers would enter among the Church undetected while disguising themselves as true believers. Once inside, they will begin to introduce destructive heresies in their teachings, which also includes a denial of the sovereign Lord. This is happening in many pulpits, and especially on streaming channels such as YouTube. Jesus said that are made manifest by their teaching and lifestyle (my paraphrase).

Additionally, this spirit of antichrist manifests itself in other two ways. First that Jesus was not the Christ. Or that Jesus was the Messiah, but he was not fully human because all matter is evil. John teaches that this false teaching is what distinguishes itself from truth. The message of Christ was first entrusted to the apostles because they knew Him personally, lived with Him, and were taught by Him.

The message of the antichrist is different from that of the apostles about Jesus. John reassures the believers that "That (God manifested in the flesh, John 1:14)] which was from the beginning (John 1:14), which we (the twelve apostles of Christ) have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched (Jesus Christ) we (the twelve apostles of Christ) proclaim concerning the Word of life (the Lord Jesus Christ)." (1 John 1:1).

Finally, the assurance of salvation is manifested in a person that [continually] confesses that Jesus is the Christ in spite of their persecution that tempts the believers to stop confessing Him. When judging the spirit behind the message, it is either the Spirit of God or the spirit of falsehood (error). In other words, this is how you can recognize the Spirit of God, because every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in the flesh – that message is from God (1 John 4:2).

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