

**Walking in the light as the true sign of Fellowship with God, 1:5 – 2:17**

**Faith in Jesus as the Christ as the test of fellowship with God, 2:18 - 27**

**Doing of righteousness as the sign that We are of God, 2:28 – 3:24**

# 3 John

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**Love as the basis of faith 4:7 - 21**

**Faith as the basis of Love 5:1 - 21**



**A THEOLOGY OF COMMUNION WITH GOD**

Wednesday Bible Study

Rose Hill Missionary Baptist Church

Rev. Maurice Jones, Pastor



# Bible Study Questions to Ponder

Is there a promise from God here?

Is God instructing me to do something?

Does this passage expose a sin I need to confess?

What does this passage tell me about God?

About Jesus?

About me?

And my Christian life?





## **Key Definition For Ministry**

The faithful Service of God's people rendered unto God and others on His behalf to bring Him glory, build up His church, and reach out to His world.

## Introduction 1, 2, AND 3 JOHN

**The Historical Setting:** Conflict and Division Each letter indicated, in its own way, that there was a conflict among the members. The conflict has been generated from within rather than from the world, but internal disputes and rivalries.

- In 3 John, the dispute appears purely political, forming a conflict between rival leaders.
- In 2 John, the conflict is connected to the issue of proper teaching.
- In 1 John, doctrinal and moral disagreements dominate.

**Purpose:** The letters 1, 2, and 3 John were not merely a response to a split in the community; they were a resolute call to the remaining members to stand unwavering in their faith and to be cautious of the teachings of those who had departed.

- ❖ The opponents are not non-believers but fellow Christians. These Christians had at first belonged to the community: those ***“who went out from us” (1 John 2:19).***
- ❖ Because of their behavior, they were given traditional titles of disdain: they are ***“false prophets” (1 John 4:1) and “antichrists” (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3).***
- ❖ In the description of 2 John 7, they are, above all, ***“deceivers who have gone out into the world.”***

# MAJOR THEMES OF THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES:

1. **“God is light, and in Him, There is no Darkness at All”**: The Nature of God. This profound statement encapsulates the key attributes of God-light, purity, truth, and prevenient love.
  - For the elder, God is the standard of fidelity, of righteousness (1 John 1:9; 3:7), and goodness (3 John 11), the agent of forgiveness (1 John 1:9; 2:12) whose central character is light (1 John 1:5,7), purity (1 John 3:3), truth (1 John 5:20), and, most significantly, prevenient love (1 John 4:7-12, 16, 19).
  - Jesus, God’s son, has been sent by the Father as the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14).
  - Through the son (1 John 2:23; 5:20), who enables obedience to his commandments (1 John 2:3-5), all believers “have” or “know” God (1 John 2:23; 4:7-8; 2 John 9).
  - They abide in or experience a fully reciprocal relationship with God (1 John 1:3; 2:24; 3:24; 4:13-16).
  - Throughout John’s epistles, the image of God as father is adopted by the elder to convey God’s personal and caring nature, not God’s gender (1 John 1:2-3; 2:1, 15-16, 22-24; 3:1; 4:14; 2 John 3-4,9).



# MAJOR THEMES OF THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES:

## 2. “What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you”: The traditional Context for Theological Understanding.

- God is the magnetic north of the elder’s theological compass. The proclamation shared with his readers is one pole of that magnetic field.
- The believing community is repeatedly driven back to “that which was heard from the beginning,” a declaration of faith (**1 John 1:1-5; 2:7; 24; 3:11; 2 John 5-6**).
- “The message we have heard and declare” are wedded in 1 John with OT precept and example (**1 John 2:2/Lev 16:16, 30; 1 John 3:12/Gen 4:1-6**).
- The community’s faith is crystallized in remembered commandments of Christ (**1 John 2:7-8; 2 John 5-6**), the example of Jesus (**1 John 2:6; 3:16-17**), and Christian creedal affirmations (**1 John 4:2; 5:6**).
- For proper interpretations of that tradition, the elder (John) recognizes the church’s experience of being anointed as “children of God” (**1 John 2:20, 27; 3:1-2**) and the necessity of “test[ing] the spirits” for their authenticity (**1 John 4:1-6**).

## 3. “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”: Who Jesus is.

- Jesus is the Christ, “the anointed one” (**1 John 2:22; 5:1**). The identification of Jesus is exceeded by another: the son of God (**2:22-23; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 20**), which is interchangeable with Christ (**5:1,5**), accents his intimate relation with God the Father (**1:3; 2:23-24; 4:13**).

# MAJOR THEMES OF THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES:

- The conjunction is so close that at many points in 1 John, it is impossible to tell whether the pronouns “he” or “him” refer to Jesus or to God (1 John 1:9-10; 2:3-6, 27-28; 3:23-24; 4:17).
- “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2) is a confession that, for the elder, appears to have acquired the status of proper doctrine.
- The surface issue concerns the proper understanding of Jesus, but the conflict's dimensions or even the precise nature are not easy to recover.
- In the most explicit fashion, rather than simply the assent of faith, the content of belief, rather than merely the assent of faith.

## 4. “He is the expiation for our sins”: What Jesus Does.

- In general, Jesus in 1 John deals with sin and its consequences. By His blood, believers are cleansed from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:7b, 9), their sins forgiven for his sake (1 John 1:9; 2:12).
- These claims are related to the depiction of Jesus as an “atoning sacrifice” for sins (1 John 2:2; 4:10). They are unique to 1 John in the NT, although Romans (Rom 3:25) and Hebrew (Heb 2:17; 9:5) contain cognates.
- The concept of vicarious expiation by one who is pure or without sin can be found in OT descriptions of cultic sacrifice (cf. Lev 4:1-35; 16:1-34 with 1 John 3:3,5; 1 Pet 1:18-19).

## MAJOR THEMES OF THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES:

- For any believer who sins, Jesus Christ, the righteous, is an advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1; cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, where intercession is performed by the Holy Spirit). “Anointing” by “the Holy One,” which instructs the church and verifies its knowledge, is yet another expression of Christ’s (or the Spirit’s) benefits (1 John 2:20, 27).
  - **An exciting feature of all these models of salvation is that they are not confined to Jesus’ past death or future coming but are considered perpetually adequate in the church’s present experience.**
- 5. “Beloved, let us love one another”: The shape of Christian Existence.**
- God’s activity in Christ establishes the context for Christian life and self-critical discernment.
  - Being **“born”** of God (1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18) or a **“child”** of God (1 John 3:1, 2, 10; 5:2), **“knowing”** God (1 John 2:3; 3:6) or **“abid[ing] in him”** (1 John 2:6, 10, 17; 3:6-10, 24; 4:16), do not describe an inward, mystical state but are concretely manifested by **“doing what is right,” “keeping his commandments,”** or **“walk[ing] just as he walked”** (1 John 2:3, 6; 3:10, 14a, 22; 5:3).
  - By contrast, “the children of the devil,” who “abide in death” and falsehood, are recognizable by their unrighteousness, disobedience, and lack of love (1 John 2:4; 3:10, 14b; cf. 3 John 11).



## MAJOR THEMES OF THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES:

- The observation of Augustine (354 – 430) that 1 John commends nothing else but love is only slightly exaggerated. More than any other concept, love (*agape*) expresses the abiding nature of the unseen God (1 John 4:7b, 8b, 12, 16), whose initiative in sending his Son reveals that love (1 John 3:16; 4:9-10), evokes love as a possibility among us (1 John 4:11, 19), and specifies the practical pattern to which our responsive love should conform (1 John 3:17 – 18; 5:3; 2 John 6).
- God's love for us (1 John 2:5; 3:1; e:16-17) and our love for God (1 John 4:20-21; 5:1) are perfected in our sibling love for one another (1 John 2:10; 3:10 – 11, 14, 23; 4:7, 11 – 12, 20 – 21; 5:2; 2 John 5; see also John 13:34; 15:12, 17).

## Introduction 1, 2, AND 3 JOHN

### The theological issues:

- ✓ In a shift from the Fourth Gospel, the opponents are thus not unbelievers but fellow Christians; they are not purely outsiders, but ones who had at first belonged to the author's group: those "who went out from us" (1 John 2:19).
- ✓ Now they are given traditional titles of disdain: they are "false prophets" (1 John 4:1) and "antichrists" (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3). In the description of 2 John 7, they are above all "deceivers who have gone out into the world."
- ✓ They reasoned that they claimed to have received a special 'anointing' of the Holy Spirit, by which they had been given **true knowledge of God (2:20, 27)**.
- ✓ This knowledge (*gnosis*) became the core of their distinctive beliefs and lifestyle, which called 'Gnosticism'.
- ✓ *Gnostic teaching:*
  - 1.) They denied the incarnation of Christ **(2:22; 4:2-3)**. They believed matter was evil and that a divine being could not be united with a physical body.
  - 2.) The goal of gnostic teaching was that with the help of insight (*gnosis*), the elect could be freed from the fetter of this world (spirit from matter, light from darkness) and return to their true home in the kingdom of light.
  - 3.) Gnostic systems are generally hostile to the created world.

# BALANCING LOVE AND TRUTH, 3 JOHN 1 - 15

## 3 John Summary

- ❖ John opens this letter by expressing his affection for Gaius, whom he loves in truth. Expressed love usually kindles further love (vv. 1-2).
- ❖ John's genuine declaration of "love in truth" immediately leads into prayer for Gaius's physical and spiritual welfare in body and soul (vv. 3-4).
- ❖ The elder commends Gaius for his hospitality and how he received traveling ministers in the church; such action springs from true Christian love (vv. 5-8).
- ❖ Here, he complains about Diotrephes's attitude and refusal to accept his authority (vv. 9-10).
- ❖ Having spoken about the conduct of Diotrephes, the elder now urges Gaius to imitate what is good rather than evil (vv. 11-12).
- ❖ The closing of the letter, hoping to communicate face to face and share his greeting with friends individually (vv. 13-15).

# BALANCING LOVE AND TRUTH, 3 JOHN 1 - 15

**Key Theme: Balancing Truth and Love.**

**Key Verse: 3 John 2-4. Live spiritually, walk truthfully, and serve faithfully.**

**Personal Application: Faith should show itself in acts of love.**

**Key Thought: As followers of Jesus, our lives and reputation ought to reflect his love, affection, and hospitality towards one another.**

**Key Thing To Look Out For: Believing that the early church never dealt with problems or that the church will never have to deal with conflicts. Despite difficulties or disputes in the church, we must continue to thrive and live holy lives.**

*Communion with God*

# **BALANCING LOVE AND TRUTH, 3 JOHN 1 – 15**

## **Key “Quotable Quote”**

**“When we appropriate God’s greatest enabler – His grace and His peace – we can achieve gentleness and calmness, even during hard times.”**

**Unknown**