

THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | JANUARY 24, 2021



Triumph of Light over Darkness – 1 John 2:3-11

PURPOSE: To know how to make the church sustainable for future generations with *orthodox* agape love.

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. ⁷ Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. ⁸ At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, **because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.** ⁹ Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

- 1 John 2:3-11

I. Dawn of a “New” Era

If you were to ask a faithful, strong fellow believer where he sees his country going, he or she will most likely say “down the tubes.” The United States, after all, is presently living out Isaiah 5:20 with government leaders being ones “who call evil good and good evil.” This doesn’t allow a whole lot of room for optimism...

But then again, the first century church was no stranger to trials either. By 65 A.D. the bloodthirsty Roman Emperor Nero had

already targeted Christians for mass killings. If the book of First John was written more towards 90 A.D. the recipients of John's letter would already know the dread of anti-Christian tyrants wielding their power. Added to this they would know the confusion and division within their own church caused by incoming false teachers.

So how can the Apostle John be so bold as to say "the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining" in chapter 2, verse 8? The answer is: the church –possibly at a time of being shepherdless- still proved they had the "anointing" (1 John 2:20) in their perseverance and fidelity to the Lord's teaching. To the Apostle John, this was proof of the triumph of spiritual light over spiritual darkness.

II. Perseverance in Heeding the Warnings of 1 John 2:3-6

We often hear people saying God's love is "unconditional." And that is true based on his sovereign grace, saving us "while we yet sinners" (Romans 5:8). However, the concept of *conditions*, or *defining marks*, is not at all contrary New Testament writings. In fact the smaller book of *First John* has twenty (20) *conditional* "if" clauses defining exactly what we mean by "Christian." This isn't referring to something you have to do to win God's favor; rather it has to do with the character of your Christian witness affirming you as a genuine brother or sister (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11-13).

A. Keeping Christ's Commandments (vv. 3-5)

- On the positive: **keeping** Christ's commandments = we know Christ and we know God's love!
- On the negative: **not keeping** Christ's commandments = a liar; a false witness.

B. Walking as Jesus Walked (v. 6)

- Resolve: We had better practice what we preach.

- Personal: We're not just following commandments, we're imitating our Savior (1 Cor. 11:1).

III. Perseverance in Light of Christ's Triumph in 1 John 2:7-8

A. The Old Commandment (v. 7)

- As it connects to verses 9 through 11, most commentaries say this is referring to John 13:34-35...

“..A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to **love one another**.³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

- Christ's Upper Room Discourse

- It would be an “old commandment” (back then too) considering the time difference between circa 30 A.D. when Christ met with his disciples in the upper room and 90 A.D. at the time of the writing of *First John*.

B. The New Commandment (v. 8)

- “New” because Christian Love is preeminently true in Christ. Jesus is the founder of Christian Love.
- “New” because the church addressed by John kept this definitive agape-love tight within their fellowship -so much so that it had a tendency to push out the spiritual darkness of meddling false teachers. This was a refreshing thing for John, and is for us, if we are found persevering the same way.

IV. The Agape-Love Mandate of 1 John 2:9-11

A. Same Positive vs. Negative Cadence of vv. 3-5

Here again, *warning* is juxtapose to *exhortation*.

B. You Cannot Have a “Love-Hate” Relationship with Your Fellow Congregant(s)

- “Hate” has to do with envy and murder, as exhibited by Cain to his brother Abel (1 John 3:11-15).
- “Love” conversely has to do with laying down your life for your brother or sister as Christ did for his own (1 John 3:16-18).

V. **What This Means for Us**

A. Perseverance & Salvation

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. - James 2:26

B. Perseverance & Separation from False Teachers

False teachers represent the ‘god of this world’ (2 Cor. 4:4) with whom no true fellowship is possible.

The Book of First John Course Outline:

- January 3 - Introduction
- January 10 - Authentic Christian Fellowship / 1 John 1:1-4
- January 17 - The Confession & The Walk / 1 John 1:5-2:2
- January 24 - Triumph of Light over Darkness / 1 John 2:3-11
- January 31 - Rallying the Troops / 1 John 2:12-17
- February 7 - The Congregational Anointing / 1 John 2:18-27
- February 14 - Know Your Roots / 1 John 2:28-3:10
- February 21 - Practical Agape Love / 1 John 3:11-24
- February 28 - Spiritual Discernment / 1 John 4:1-6
- March 7 - Perfected Agape Love / 1 John 4:7-5:4
- March 14 - Orthodox Christology / 1 John 5:5-12
- March 21 - Peace (and War) unto Eternity / 1 John 5:13-21
- March 28 - Conclusion