

Epistle of First John X

Effective Prayer
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I just want to review because the Epistles of John were written in a time

- when the Church was in upheaval
- when the Church was in turmoil
- when the Church had those who came into the Church and were changing the doctrines and turning the people away from God

The book of Jude tells us—and so does 2-Peter—that they have come in ‘privily’ (secretly). Almost like this movie with Charles Bronson, where the Russians are just absolutely beside themselves because they have this one renegade KGB official who had programmed all these American spies to where years later they would get a phone call; and the phone call would be something like: ‘the meadows are green,’ you know, and it’s ‘beautiful and wonderful.’ It triggered in their mind to go ahead and get their stored-away bombs and go out and blow up their pre-determined mission that they were to blow up, usually American bases.

But I think that there are people that come into the Churches of God who are distinctly plants. Who are there for the moment and the time to do what they were sent there for. Because it’s happened not only in Worldwide, but it’s happened in Church of God Seventh-Day and the Seventh-Day Adventist Churches. Just to give you an example of what some of them do: Have you ever tried to go the public library and check out the book *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop. What happens in the library, it’s perpetually checked out until it’s lost. Because there are people who are sent to take it away and get it out.

Now, there’s a book called *Four Thousand Years of the History of Christmas*, which is listed in Andrew’s University Library—where Carl is doing a lot of his research right now, getting his research material—and it’s gone. For the first time in years, that Seventh Day Adventist college—which is the home of Samuele Bacchicchi if you have his book, *From Sabbath to Sunday*—they are celebrating Christmas in a way that has never been celebrated in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. They had the Christmas carols playing and Christmas trees and everything. So, Carl went up to the, to the librarian as he was checking out and said, ‘My, what’s all of this going on with Christmas? I can’t find the book, *Four Thousand Years of the History of Christmas*. You know it’s pagan don’t you?’ She said, ‘Yes, I

know, but all of this is just, is just being pushed upon us now.’ So, it’s happening worldwide in all ‘Christian’ churches—whether Sabbath-keepers or Sunday-keepers—to meld them together. The secret, undercover ecumenical movement waiting for the moment.

Now, the pope—man of the year—I’ve got his little book, been reading it. It’s amazing, but it’s going to come! That’s why the Epistles of John are so important for us; because of several profound things: First of all, let’s go to where it says, ‘God’s way’—*The Word Studies from the Greek (Seven General Epistles)*, pg. 92-93). And so, I’ve listed out the ten things, which point out God’s way *clearly, profoundly, contrasting*. They are simple, but yet, they are deep when you get in and study them.

- Light
- Truth
- love
- repentance, confession of sins
- cleansed and forgiven through Jesus Christ our Advocate
- Spirit of God—begetting from the Father
- obedience—commandment-keeping
- true knowledge
- living and abiding in God’s way
- Jesus Christ spiritually dwelling in each Christian
- the end of that then is eternal life

Then he contrasts it with the devil’s way, which is. Darkness, deception or error. What is the key Scripture we’ve gone back to time and time again? ***There is no lie from the Truth!***

This, I think, is going to have to be the basic way that we are going to have to approach things for new people. New people are interested in ***Truth!*** There’s been enough around that they can all see the phony-baloney stuff of hierarchy, religion, politics and all of this. If God is going to call them, how is God going to call them? *Through His Truth!* So the way to approach a lot of this is this way: ***There is no lie of the Truth.***

- How can the Truth of God be supported by the lie of Christmas?
- How can the Truth of God be supported by the lie of Easter?
- What are those?
- *Those are merchandising, which is the greatest sin of Satan the devil!*

A lot of people think that the sin of Satan the devil was his original rebellion. But his original rebellion was merchandising. Are they not merchandised with Christmas and Easter? *Oh my, yes!* Then you take all of these other things.

- Why does the God of *light, love and truth* need a lie to support Him?
- *He does not need it!*

So, that's why John wrote this. Here's *the way of the spirit of deception*, the children of the devil in darkness:

- darkness
- deception and lies
- loving the world
- hating God and the brethren
- the spirit of the devil, which is his influence and the counterfeit begettal
- the denial of the sinful nature and sinful actions: 'why, we're all good wonderful people'
- disobedience, commandment-breaking, lawlessness and transgression
- false knowledge

Isn't it interesting how that a true translation of eating of the tree: 'You shall know good and evil.' But it really should be translated: 'You shall be *knowers* of good and evil.' There's a difference, because a 'knower' is someone who establishes the standard of good and evil, which then really tells us that going all the way back to the Garden of Eden, the religion that Satan the devil preached was *Gnostic!* A Gnostic is a *knower!*

What do all these religions do? *They establish their own religion while they're rejecting God's*—every single one of them. What are all these secret societies based upon? *Inner knowledge! Knowers!* Goes right back to the beginning—that's incredible! And that's Satan's way, *false knowledge.*

- living and abiding in the devil and deception, the devil spiritually motivating his children, and the end of that is *spiritual death!*

We ended up in part nine by covering 1-John 3:16, and we looked at many of the verses in the New Testament where we have chapter three and verse sixteen and it turned out to be quite profound. Now, not all 3:16s match up, but there were enough of them. Let's just review:

1-John 3:16: "By this *very act* we have known the love of God... [in sending His Son Christ] ...because He laid down His life for us: and we ourselves are to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and

sees his brother in need, and shuts up his feelings of compassion from him, how can the love of God be dwelling in him?" (vs 16-17).

All the way through it is a present tense verb or it is a present tense participle indicating *ongoing action*, or something that is *continuously taking place*. "...how can the love of God be dwelling in him?"

Now, let's look at a couple of Scriptures. James says the same thing. James put it in another way, and it's quite interesting the way that he does this; notice what he says concerning the Law. And I think it's profound that it is, it is the same way in the Epistles of John. Many people look to the 'Royal Law.' What is the 'golden rule' in business? *He who has the gold sets the rules!* That's *not* the 'golden rule' of God.

James 2:8: "If you are truly keeping *the Royal Law* according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you have respect of persons, you are practicing sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors" (vs 8-9).

Which commandment does that encompass? *Many! Many!* You go back and read in the book of Deuteronomy and Exodus how many laws pertain to your neighbor, his property, his field, his animals, his wife, his children—and all of those are encompassed in this Law. But, if you have 'respect of persons' you're sinning. That takes it above and beyond then—doesn't it? *Yes, it does!*

Verse 10: "For *if* anyone keeps the whole Law, but sins in one *aspect*, he becomes guilty of all.... [Sunday-keepers need to think about that] ...For He Who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'You shall not commit murder.' Now, if you do not commit adultery, but you commit murder, you have become a transgressor of *the Law*" (vs 10-11). You know what someone is going to say: 'See, he didn't say the Sabbath—did he?'

- Does he have to? *No!*
- Why?
- Who is James? *The brother of the Lord*—correct?
- What was he? *He was the apostle at Jerusalem!*
- Do you think when he was alive they had Sunday-keeping in Jerusalem?
- Was Sunday/Sabbath-keeping a controversy then? *No way!*

That's why this is mentioned. If it were a problem back then he surely would have mentioned it—wouldn't he? *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 12: "In this manner speak and in this

manner behave: as those who are about to be judged by *the* law of freedom. For the one who has dealt without mercy *will be* judged without mercy....” (vs 12-13). That’s what happens when you have respect of persons and are judging.

“...But mercy triumphs over judgment. My brethren, what good *does* it do, if anyone says *that he* has faith, and does not have works? Is faith able to save him? Now then, if there be a brother or sister who is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; be warmed and be filled,’ and does not give to them the things necessary for the body, what good is it? In the same way also, faith, if it does not have works, is dead, by itself” (vs 13-17).

What happens if you say you have faith but no works? Say, ‘Oh, I love the Law.’ That ought to be. Then what are you? *You’re a hearer of the Law, not a doer!* But what did Paul say? Paul said, ‘The hearers of the Law are not just before God, but the *doers* of the Law shall be justified.’ All the way through the New Testament it all fits together in one big whole.

Sometimes you’re going to do these things that you won’t even, you won’t even realize that you’re doing it. This has to do with the Church as well as some other needy:

Matthew 25:31: “Now, when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the Holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon *the* throne of His glory; and He shall gather before Him all the nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at *His* left. Then shall the King say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from *the* foundation of *the* world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; *I was* naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me” (vs 31-36).

Verse 37: “Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed *You*? Or thirsty, and gave *You* a drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and took *You* in? Or naked, and clothed *You*? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and came to *You*?’ And answering, the King shall say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you have done *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you have done *it* to Me” (vs 37-40). Then you know the opposite of it.

That follows right through. The reason that we’re going through these this way is so that we see the consistency that is in all the Bible. If you want another study to do beyond this, go back into the Old Testament and look at the things that God provided for the poor. First of all, He said: ‘Don’t cut out the corners of your field, but leave the gleaning for the needy. You shall not deprive them.’ He also even said, ‘You shall not even muzzle the ox that’s treading out the corn.’ Now, how would you like to be an ox treading out the corn and you’re hungry as can be and you smell all of this that you’re grinding up and you can’t even stick your head down there and, you know, grab a little bit of it and eat.

I know there are times when the horses want all this green grass just on the other side of the fence. I’ve always notice that when you go up there and pluck out some that green grass and hold it up, boy, that’s what they want. They really like that.

John shows something that’s very, very profound, very important. It has a lot to do

- with our relationship with God
- with answered prayer
- with our relationship one with another

1-John 3:18: “My little children, we should not love in word... [*message*; also *that which you write out*] ...nor with *our* tongues; rather, *we should love* in deed and in Truth.”

Now, ‘work’ can be *in action, in deed* in the things that you do, and ‘in Truth.’ There is *Truth* again, coming up over and over again in the things that are required for our behavior. We have all of those things that are required there. {note Matt. 5, 6 & 7; that’s how Christ said that we are to live God’s way.}

All the spirit of the Law, as we covered in the sermon on the *Two Righteousness*’—the imputed righteousness of Christ, Christ in you. What it’s supposed to do is to give us the right action

- of faith
- of love
- of belief
- obedience

—and all that these things that we’re studying stands for in relationship to Christ and what we are to do. It’s to be something that is in deed or an action or in work and in Truth.

What does this do for us? It does something profound. Now, there is a book called *Code of Jewish Law* by Ganzfried and Goldin. In the first paragraph of that book: The whole reason for the laws of Judaism is to make you have a guilty

conscience before God. That is the total opposite of what God wants us to have. Here's what Christ's way is supposed to be doing for us:

Verse 19: "And in this way we know that we are of the Truth, and shall assure our hearts... [in His presence] ...before Him." God wants us to be confident. God wants us to be loving. We're to fear God, keep His commandments—that is true—but God does not want us to go around with a guilty conscience.

- God is offering us eternal life.
- He's offering us the Kingdom.
- He's offering us the greatest and most profound promises that can possibly be given.
- Plus He's giving us the ways and the means to get there—is He not? *Yes!*

He wants us to have our hearts reassured in His presence. Now that is not going to make us cocky. That is not going to make us self-confident; because ***we know that there's nothing we haven't received***—it all comes from God, 'and be assuring our hearts in His presence.' He also accounts for the problems of sin. All the way through 1st, 2nd and 3rd John!

Verse 20: "That if our hearts condemn us..." What happens when you sin and you know you've sinned? You've done something you know that you don't want to do? As we've read many times in Rom. 7: You didn't want to do it, but you did it. Now you feel guilty because you have done it. The first thing you want to do is wait until you're right with God before you go pray, which is the last thing. You want to bring every thought into captivity to Christ, which means: ***God knows it.***

When you sin, not *if*. Do we know it? *Well, most of the time!* Sometimes we try and avoid it. Sometimes we try and trick ourselves out of it. 'Well, it wasn't that bad.' What's the first thing that happens when you want to trick yourself out of it and make yourself feel not so bad?

- What's the first thing you always, always, always do? *You rationalize it!*
- How do you rationalize it? *Ok, it wasn't that bad!*
- Why wasn't it that bad? *Because someone else did worse than me!*
- Now what else also happens?

Today, the psychologists are right there to say: 'Society made you do it. You're not responsible for that. It's not your fault.' Notice the famous trials we've had: the Menendez brothers brutally shot and killed, with shotguns, their mother and father. And

they ran out of ammunition, went out to the car and got more ammunition, reloaded it and came in and killed them. Finally they were arrested and brought to court and they all got up there and cried and boo-hoed and said, 'Well, they made us do it.' Hung jury. Couldn't convict them, because after all, it wasn't their fault.

So you see, ***when you sin***, your heart condemns you. Now what do you do? Well, the longer you run around with this guilty conscience, the worse off you're going to be. Here's what John shows is the solution.

Verse 20: "That if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." What do we do then? *We go to 1-John, the first chapter!* Here's what we do.

I know people say, 'I know I shouldn't have done this.' God knows that, too. Other people know that, too. 'I'm so bad God can't forgive me.' Oh really? What have you done? We won't list our sins but I'm just going through a rationalization. ***Have hope!***

Go back and read 2-Chron. 33. King Manasseh—the worst king, the most sinful king—for ***55 years*** he did it. Got involved in demonism, building idols right in God's temple. God was so angry He sent him off in captivity. He humbled himself and prayed to God and repented, and God heard his prayer and set him back on his throne as a vassal king under the Babylonians. Have you sinned for 55 years as bad a Manasseh? *No!* Therefore, don't ever say that God doesn't understand. That's the point. So, if you have a heart that's condemning you, don't say that God doesn't understand, ***He does!***

Here's what to do, 1-John 1:7: "However, if we walk in the Light... [is what we are doing] ...as He is in the Light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin." God knows that we're going to sin with the 'law of sin and death' in us, so He has provided this way and this means so we can have the condemnation removed and reassure our hearts before God. This becomes:

- most important in prayer
- most important in faith
- most important in understanding how we get through to God

Verse 8: "If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. ***If we are confessing our own sins...*** [present tense] ...He is faithful and righteous to forgive us

our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (vs 8-9). So, if your heart condemns you because of sin, that’s what to do. That’s exactly what to do. **Go to God and repent!**

Now there’s something else concerning God, which is important. They were having a discussion concerning physical circumcision *vs* spiritual circumcision (Acts 15:8); forgiveness of sin; right standing with God; and, the term there where it says ‘and God knows the heart.’ It’s interesting in the Greek—it’s much better. It is the *heart-knowing* God, because that’s what God is looking to. God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

1 John 3:21 is where prayer really begins to take hold. Have you ever wondered, some of those promises concerning prayer? We’ll look at some of them. They are profound! They are carte blanche, they are blanks to be filled in, all according to the will of God. Remember, when you have any prayer that you pray, first thing is that you honor God the Father. Then the next thing is ‘Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ And that’s what we want with our lives. God’s will for our lives. Our desire, in prayer may not necessarily be God’s will, but if we are truly loving God and seeking His way, and we are asking God to help us to have His will become our will, then there are some profound promises concerning prayer.

1-John 3:21: “Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, *then* we have confidence toward God.” That’s a tremendous feeling. When you go pray with a conscience that is not condemned, with a conscience that is assured and have *confidence toward God*. That’s a whole other level of communicating with God—if I could put it that way.

Verse 22: “And **whatever** we may ask we receive from Him... [that’s pretty broad] ...because we keep His commandments and practice those things that are pleasing in His sight.” Notice all of the conditions involved.

1. You have to have your heart assure you by getting rid of the condemnation through repentance and confession to get rid of the sin and the guilty conscience.
2. You reassure your heart before God and then you have confidence.

If your heart is not condemning you then that confidence goes to:

- 1) asking—whatever you may
- 2) we’re going to receive
- 3) because we’re keeping His commandments
- 4) we are practicing those things that are pleasing before Him, *in His presence*

Though you are not geographically in the presence of God, you are always *spiritually in the presence of God if you have His Spirit!* So, you are practicing those things, which are pleasing to Him.

Let’s look at this and see how this all ties together with quite a few other Scriptures which we can put together here. This is going to help us understand, especially now, especially for those of you who have been Christians, having the Spirit of God, for a long time. This becomes especially important so that you can really have that confidence that God wants you to have. God is not going to bless you with some things of the world that you don’t need. What is the will of God concerning that? What did Jesus say? ‘*If a man gain the whole world and lose his soul.*’ So, you don’t measure *spiritual* things in terms of physical things. You don’t measure *spiritual* growth by physical things.

What if, what if your life has been one of a great deal of suffering and misery? And you are truly building the character of Christ? *It’s the will of God!* Sometimes it is the will of God that you suffer things. When you suffer things are they unjust? What did Peter say? ‘Well, if we suffer because of what we’ve done, then you haven’t done anything great. But, if you suffer as a Christian, then that’s commendable before God.’ Notice this little Church:

- anytime you think you’re down and out
- anytime you think you’ve had it bad
- anytime you get depressed and feeling sorry for yourself
- anytime your heart is condemning you and wondering, well where is God, now is He going to answer your prayers and what is God doing for you, to you and in you

Come to:

Revelation 2:8^[transcriber’s correction]: “And to the angel of the Church of *the* Smyrneans write: These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead but is alive. ‘I know your works and **tribulation and poverty** (but you are rich)...’” (vs 8-9)—a life of trouble and poorness—and nothing seems to work. But, if you have spiritual character, what does Jesus say?

“...and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison... [is that going to happen to some of us? *Yes!* The day’s going to come] ...that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days.... [here’s something to really cheer you up]: ...**Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life**” (vs 9-10).

In today's world that's not too cheerful. But when you're struggling and you're down and out, and those things are happening, that gives you

- strength
- power
- determination

I know this for sure: There is no way, *no way* that anyone is going to be faithful unto death unless they love God with all their heart, mind, soul and being; unless they believe what they believe to the very core of their being. Otherwise, the way out is going to be very simple. Because the alternative is going to be: 'Well, you don't need to suffer these things; you are doing this to yourself.' ***Just think on that!***

Now, this kind of ties together both of these things; Hebrews 4:12: "For the Word of God *is* living and powerful... [the Greek there is 'didumos'—*has power*] ...and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of both soul and spirit..." So, they are separable. 'The soul that sins shall die.'

"...and of both *the* joints and *the* marrow, and *is* able to discern *the* thoughts and intents of *the* heart" (v 12). You think about that when it says, 'and if your heart be condemning you,' go to God and get it straightened out. Let it assure you, because God knows.

Verse 13: "And there is not a created thing that is not manifest in His sight; but all things *are* naked and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account. Having, therefore, a great High Priest, *Who* has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we should hold fast the confession of *our faith*" (vs 13-14). ***In spite of any circumstances around us, whatsoever—period!***

Verse 15: "For we do not have a High Priest Who cannot empathize with our weaknesses, but *One Who* was tempted in all things according to *the* likeness of *our own temptations*; yet, *He* was without sin.... [How do we come to God?] ...Therefore, we should come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (vs 15-16). And that's what they were doing there in the Church in Pergamos.

Remember when Paul was thrown into jail? They put him in jail, and he was back there pounding his fists on the rocks and saying: 'God how dare you let this happen to me, don't you know I'm your apostle. Don't you know that I'm the greatest thing that's ever walked the face of the earth? You called me.' ***NO!***

They went back there with Silas, and they were sitting there with their hands and their feet in the stocks and what were they doing? *Singing hymns, praying to God!* What did God do? *Just sent an earthquake* and POW! Opened it up, all the doors came open and the jailer went out there and he said, 'Oh my, get the swords, they're all going to be gone.' Then he was going to commit suicide and kill himself, cause he thought, man, it's the worst thing that ever come. All the prisoners are going to be gone, and Paul said, 'Don't do it! Don't do it! We're all here. Keep it cool.' Then he came crawling up to him and, and said, 'Come on. Come on to my house and we'll clean you up.' And they were all converted.

(go to the next track)

Through those things, God can change a person's mind and heart. We are not praying to a God who has not experienced what we have—and worse. We're praying to God, Whose Son suffered worse than any human being ever created has suffered, ***so that He can forgive us.*** Now, we'll have more and talk about that as we get down toward the time of Passover.

Hebrews 5:7: "Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death..." That's quite a profound verse! Did Jesus have to be saved from death? Why would He pray to be saved from death if He didn't have to be saved from death?

"...and was heard because *He* feared *God*. Although He was a Son, *yet*, He learned obedience from the things that He suffered" (vs 7-8).

We can look back now because hindsight is always 20/20—and we can look back and see many of the things that we have gone through, that we can see the lessons and the reason why. I think one of the reasons for us is so that we would not have to be controlled by some corporation in telling us how to study and interpret the Bible, but just stick with the Bible. That's been the most profound and important thing for us to do. We had to suffer. We had to suffer at the hands of friends. Suffer at the hands of enemies. Not that we have wounds. We can't stand up and say, "Look at this one, I remember where I got this, you know, slash of the sword in the side." But we had daggers in our backs! And the worst thing of all, it all happened within the Church of God—the place of 'brotherly love'—right? ***Yes!*** Why did it happen? ***Because of the very things that are going on as accounted here in the Epistles of John!*** Christ went through that. He suffered those.

Verse 9: “And having been perfected, He became *the* Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him.” Very interesting, there is obedience required—is there not? *Yes!*

There’s something concerning prayer that’s very important; when you read some of these verses, they’re really quite astounding:

John 14:6 is one of the most profound verses in the entire Bible: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am **the Way**, and **the Truth**, and **the Life**...’”

- Very profound!
- Very specific!
- Very narrow!
 - He is not *a* way
 - He is not *a* truth
 - He is not *a* life
 - He is ‘THE Way
 - THE Truth
 - THE Life’—*no other way*.

“...**no one** comes to the Father, **except through Me**” (v 6). That’s interesting there, *no one!* It means absolutely *no one!*

Verse 10: “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I speak to you, I do not speak from My own self; but the Father Himself, Who dwells in Me, does... [present tense] ...the works.”

Even the One Who gave up being God to become a human being did not go out and do something Himself on His own—*the Father in Him!*

This is what’s dumbfounding to me, v 12: “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me shall also do the works that I do; and greater works than these shall he do because I am going to the Father.”

We know in the book of Acts we can see there were greater works that the apostles did, in some cases, that literally fulfilled this. But I would have to say, brethren, that in our lifetime, we have yet to see this done. Can it be done? *Yes, when it’s God’s will to be done!* But notice what we have to do. We have to have that *living believing faith*.

Verse 13: “And whatever you shall ask in My name, this will I do... [carte blanche] ... that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*... [notice the condition]: ...**If** you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments” (vs 13-15).

These are some of the things we can look to when our heart is not condemning us and we are

assured before God. It doesn’t have to be great long prayers. I tell you what. You can have a great long prayer, just like Jesus said, ‘Be not like the heathen for they think with their much speaking that they will be heard.’ Try listening to the *Catholic Hour*, which is fifteen minutes, sometime. See if you can get through all the way through the ‘hail Marys.’ I tried that one time. I memorized the whole thing: ‘Hail Mary, mother of God, blessed be the fruit of your womb Jesus. Hail Mary, mother of God, blessed be the fruit of your womb Jesus’—over and over and over.

- What do you learn with that? *Nothing!*
- What have you prayed with that? *Nothing!*
- What answer are you going to get? *Nothing!*

John 15:7: “If you dwell in Me... [remain and live in Christ] ...and My words dwell in you... [remain and live in you—that’s how we’re to have the mind of Christ] ...you shall ask whatever you desire...”

Now it’s turned around to what you desire. Why? Why do you suppose it’s changed here from the prayer which says: ‘Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven’? The answer is simple: *if you have the words of Christ abiding in you, you’re going to ask what according to will of the Father truly is*. Then your will is the will of the Father, because it is in you.

- you’re going to know better than to ask, ‘Oh God, bless me with the lottery’
because you know that’s not God’s will
- you’re going to know better than run down to the racetrack and say, ‘God, which one should I bet on?’
- you’re going to know better than to get into schemes, which are deceitful. Why? *Because deceitful things never work!* You want the truth.

“...you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; live in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love. These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and that your joy may be full” (vs 7-11). He says a little later: ‘Watch out because they’re going to kill you.’

Verse 12: “This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you.” We’ll expound that a little more when we get into the

whole section concerning love.

John 16:23—concerning prayer: “And in that day you shall ask Me nothing...” Please always remember and please understand that what God the Father has done through Jesus Christ is this: that **you have direct access to God the Father!** There is nothing between you and God the Father. Not even Christ. Does Christ stand in front of the throne of God? *No! He’s at the right hand!* Therefore, there can’t be a pope; there can’t be an apostle; there can’t be a minister or pastor or deacon or anyone **between you and God.** When we pray it is our Father in heaven—**it’s direct!**

Verse 23: “And in that day you shall ask Me nothing. Truly, truly I tell you, whatever you shall ask the Father in My name...” You ask in His name because Christ is in you, so then your prayer actually becomes the prayer of Christ.

“...He will give you. Until this day, you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full” (vs 23-24).

Verse 26: “In that day, you shall ask in My name; and I do not tell you that I will beseech the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you...” (vs 26-27).

Always remember that when you get down, when you get out, when you get discouraged, when you have hit bottom. As one man that I wrote a letter to—he had just gone through so much—and I said, yes, I know what it’s like to ‘walk through the valley of death. But have hope, God is always there.’

So, **when all else fails**, remember, **God loves you!** Maybe there will be times when you feel your wife doesn’t love you, your husband doesn’t love you, your children don’t love you, none of your co-workers love you—no one in the world loves you and you’re walking around with this, with this look on your face, you know, that’s all discouraged and down and out. **Remember, God the Father loves you! Himself! Personally!** And if you have the Spirit of God in you, that’s from the Father; that’s how much He loves you.

Verse 27: “the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.”

Verse 33: “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace.... [that is peace of mind, understanding, peace with God] ...In the world you shall have tribulation. But be courageous! I have overcome the world”—which is very profound for us to understand.

God is going to continue to answer prayer;

Matthew 7:7: “**Ask**... [the Greek means: *keep on asking*] ...and it shall be given you. **Seek**, and you shall find. **Knock**, and it shall be opened unto you.” Who has to do the initiating? *You do!* You have your works that you have to do.

Verse 8: “For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you who, if his son shall ask *for* bread, will give him a stone? And if he shall ask *for* a fish, will give him a serpent? Therefore, if you, being evil...” (vs 8-11).

Now, think on that. That’s quite a profound statement by Jesus talking to His own disciples. If you who are evil by nature—apart from the Spirit of God, apart from the way of God.

“...know *how* to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father Who *is* in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?” (v 11). God knows how we need these things.

Matthew 6:6: “But you, when you pray, enter into a private room... [some quiet, closed, private place] ...and after shutting the door, pray to your Father Who *is* in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret shall reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*; for they think that by multiplying their words they shall be heard. Now then, do not be like them; for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him” (vs 6-8).

One time I had someone ask me: ‘Well, if He knows we have need before we ask, why do we have to ask?’ Sometimes what we have need of is not what we think we have need of. *God is going to give us what we have need of!* But how great is God, going to do that? How great is He, going to do that?

We could add many other Scriptures, many other Psalms—go through the whole subject of prayer, that’s not the intent of this. The intent of this is to show how that your prayers are much more effective when you’re loving God, confessing your sins and are not condemned in your heart and conscience, but have assurance to God.

Ephesians 3:20: “Now, to Him Who is able... [*has the power and the capacity*] ...to do **exceeding abundantly**...” I want you to think what it’s going to be like:

- to truly have eternal life
- to truly be in the Kingdom of God
- to truly have your body transformed into a spirit body
- to truly see God face-to-face

That's what he's meaning here: "...to do **exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...**" (v 20). What does God want to give and grant to us?

That's what it is right here: "...**above all that we ask or think**" according to the power that is working in us" (v 20). That's through the Spirit of God, Christ in us.

There's something else that we're to do. There's another special, important ingredient that follows with that.

1-John 3:22: "And whatever we may ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and practice those things that are pleasing in His sight." Not only just keep the commandments, but do the things that please God. Obviously, it's not pleasing to God that we sin. That's why He provides the way so we can repent.

- How can we please God?
- Ever thought about that?
- How can you please God?

Paul tells us that the average person cannot please God. The one without the Spirit of God cannot please God. **You have to have the Spirit of God!** Now, this follows right along with the 'no condemnation.' If you've repented of your sins, received the Spirit of God, are walking in the way of God, keeping His commandments, loving God, confessing your sins, walking in the grace of God.

Romans 8:1: "Consequently, *there is* now no condemnation... [so you see how pleasing God and 'no condemnation' work together] ...to those who are in Christ Jesus, who are not walking according to *the flesh*, but according to *the Spirit*."

- motivated by the Spirit of God
- thinking the thoughts of God
- doing the will of God

Verse 2: "Because the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has delivered me from the law of sin and death" (v 2).

Verse 5: "For those who walk according to the flesh mind the things of the flesh..."—the things of the world—all the things that are in the world. We covered that, when we went through there, that section in 1-John 2.

"...but those who walk according to *the Spirit* mind the things of the Spirit" (v 5). Here is one of the very first Scriptures you ever heard when you were being called.

Verse 6: "For to be carnally minded *is* death, but **to be spiritually minded is life and peace...** [peace with God] ...because the carnal mind *is*

enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God; neither indeed can it *be* (vs 6-7).

- it conveniently changes Sabbath to Sunday
- it conveniently changes that you will not make any idols to have them everywhere
- it conveniently changes the nature of God
- It conveniently changes the use of the name of God
- and all the way down with all the commandments of God

"...is not subject to the Law of God; neither indeed can it *be*. But **those who are in the flesh cannot please God**" (vs 7-8). And yet, it says:

1-John 3:22: "...we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and practice those things that are pleasing in His sight."

Quite a transformation! Quite a life of conversion from one of hostility to doing the things that please God. You try this sometime. This is the test, for all you married people. In the face of even adversity, do the things for your husband or your wife that is pleasing to them. Try that! That'll give you a little practice. Try it! I challenge you this way. Try it, right after you've had a little spat! *Then it's tough!* I speak from experience. One of the greatest sins of the Church of God is to make the ministers nearly God! **They're not!** That's quite a challenge.

Let's look at what was told of Jesus. This is where we are to come to on our Christian walk, in our conversion. Here's where our walk needs to come. This was right after Jesus was baptized.

Matthew 3:16: "And after He was baptized, Jesus came up immediately out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him. And lo, a voice from heaven said, '**This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I have great delight**'" (vs 16-17). Why is that?

John 8:29 is where we need to come to in our lives with Christ. In growing, in changing, in overcoming, and with each other. Here's what Jesus said:

John 8:29: "And He Who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone because I always do the things that please Him."

That is the ultimate goal of everything that we do, brethren. So, when we tie that in with 1-John 3:22 here, that we are *practicing, doing*—action—'those things which are pleasing to Him.'

All right, where does this begin? The truth is this: You grow in your conviction, in faith and belief

and love of God the longer that you have the Spirit of God. I personally do not want to go back to my first love when I was first baptized—except just in the sense of the innocence of it—because I knew nothing. We are to come to **know** God. We are to come to **know** the Father.

Hebrews 11:6—here’s where we begin the whole process: “Now, without faith *it is impossible to please God...*” You can’t come to God and say: ‘Well, I don’t believe You, God. I’ve prayed all this and You never answered a prayer.’ That’s the wrong statement. If you’ve been praying a long time for something and God hasn’t answered the prayer, you need to ask: Why has that prayer not been answered?

- maybe it’s not God’s will
- maybe you’re seeking it for your own
- maybe God has a greater lesson
- maybe the spiritual growth that God wants you to have is what you need to look to and not the thing of a prayer being unanswered

You’ve got to have the faith and believe. “...For it is mandatory *for* the one who comes to God **to believe...**” (v 6). Absolutely demanded of God, because God *is God!* God has created all that there is. *Must believe!* Now granted, you can’t see Him.

“...that He exists, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (v 6).

What if you were born—and of course, this statement is kind of a ‘what if’—you never knew your mother, you never knew your father. Therefore, your mother and father don’t exist because you’ve never seen them. How did you get here? *Therefore, your mother and father must have existed!* But you have never seen them, and you don’t know them, but they are, in reality, your mother and father, provided that they’re not old enough to have died at this point. We’ll assume that you were a younger child.

It’s likewise with God. When you come to God you **believe** that He is the One Who has created everything that there is. You don’t have to see Him to know that that is a fact. ***He’ll diligently reward you!***

Let’s see something about what it is when we please God and we will see the contrast here in how this is applied in pleasing God and not pleasing God.

Proverbs 16:1: “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the LORD. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes... [self-justification] ...but the LORD weighs the spirits.... [here’s how to begin to please God]: ...Commit your works unto the LORD, and

your thoughts shall be established” (vs 1-3).

That’s how you overcome a carnal mind and the lust of the mind. *You bring every thought into captivity unto Christ* (Cor. 10). When you do that, is that pleasing to God? *Yes!*

Verse 4: “The LORD has made all for His own purpose; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Everyone who is proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD... [that’s one that’s not doing what pleases God] ...*though joined hand in hand...* [the majority] ...he shall not be unpunished” (vs 4-5).

What did Jesus say? ‘*Straight is the way and narrow is the gate that leads to life, but broad is the way and wide is the gate that leads unto destruction.*’ And many there be that go in at that gate. They’re all going to be, they’re all going to suffer their punishment. They make look prosperous. They may look like they’re doing well. They may be in the majority. They may sound very convincing. *But if it’s not of God the day is coming!*

Verse 6: “By mercy and Truth iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the LORD *men* turn away from evil.... [What does that do?] ...When a man’s ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (vs 6-7). That’s quite something!

Here’s another way to make your ways please God. To where then we are practicing those things, which are **pleasing** in His sight. I wonder how many sermons that the Apostle Paul preached on this, where he would go to Jer. 30 and say: ‘The New Covenant is to have the laws of God written in your heart and your mind, your inward parts.’

Then I’m sure he would go to Proverbs 3:1: “My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commandments... [within] ...for they shall add length of days, and long life, and peace, to you. Do not let mercy and Truth forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them upon the tablet of your heart; and so you shall find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man” (vs 1-4).

Why? *Because your ways then are pleasing God!* This all adds to the power of prayer. This all adds to the confidence in our standing with God.

Verse 5: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding.” That is a lifetime project, right there.

I look back at all the mistakes I’ve made, and there are many. Every one is that I ‘leaned to my own understanding.’ Many times I was told that, but I wouldn’t listen, so guess what? BAM! It happened!

Verse 6: “In all your ways acknowledge

Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil” (vs 6-7). All that ties in with doing the things that please God.

1-John 3:22: “And whatever we may ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments...”

Oh, by the way, a Protestant ploy is: you keep the commandments of love. Isn't that what they say? *Yes!* Always remember this

Matthew 22:37: “And Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is *the* first and greatest commandment; and *the* second *one is* like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (vs 37-40).

Every single commandment of God is a commandment of love! So think on that! Let's turn it around the other way: God through the Old Testament and show me which commandment is not a commandment based upon love; even the health commandments. *They're all based on love!*

1-John 22: “And whatever we may ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and practice those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and that we love one another, exactly as He gave commandment to us. And the one who keeps His commandments is dwelling in Him...” (vs 22-24).

The word *abides* from the Greek is ‘meno’—which means *abides, remains, dwells, lives*. I helped straighten out who the ‘he’ and the ‘him’ is. The capitalized word is Christ.

Verse 24: “And the one who keeps His commandments is dwelling in Him, and He in him; and by this...” This is what we are to know. Now, there are times when you feel low, when you feel condemned, that you kind of wonder. But nevertheless, this is what we're to know:

“...we know that **He is dwelling in us; by the Spirit which He has given to us**” (v 24).

We are to not ever have a doubt that we have the Spirit of God! It is God's Spirit in us then,

- which leads us to keep His commandments
- which leads us to understand sin that we may repent
- which leads us to desire to do the things that please Him

And all of these come together here in the Epistles of John. So, ***the days and times we're living in these epistles are very important!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

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- 1) 1-John 3:16-17
- 2) James 2:8-17
- 3) Matthew 25:31-40
- 4) 1-John 3:18-20
- 5) 1-John 1:7-9
- 6) 1-John 3:21-22
- 7) Revelation 2:8-10
- 8) Hebrews 4:12-16
- 9) Hebrews 5:7-9
- 10) John 14:6, 10, 12-15
- 11) John 15:7-12
- 12) John 16:23-24, 26-27, 33
- 13) Matthew 7:7-11
- 14) Matthew 6:6-8
- 15) Ephesians 3:20
- 16) 1-John 3:22
- 17) Romans 8:1-2, 5-8
- 18) 1-John 3:22
- 19) Matthew 3:16-17
- 20) John 8:29
- 21) Hebrews 11:6
- 22) Proverbs 16:1-7
- 23) Proverbs 3:1-7
- 24) 1-John 3:22
- 25) Matthew 22:37-40
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Sermon: *Two Righteousnesses*'

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