

The First Letter of John

True knowledge

Answers to Session Six; Review and Impressions

1. Despite the sense of importance and urgency in what John wants his readers to do, he masks the commands in a gentle manner, reminding us that we know what we ought to be doing, and he doesn't hesitate to repeat the most important.

Walk in the light and have fellowship with one another, 1:7

Confess our sins, 1:9

Try not to sin, 2:1

Obey [Christ's] commands, 2:3

Walk as Jesus did, 2:6

Live in the light and love your brother in Christ, 2:9

Don't be in darkness by hating your brother, 2:11

Know Christ, 2:13

Know the Father, 2:14

Let the word of God live in you, 2:14

Do not love the world or anything in the world, 2:15

Do the will of God, 2:17

Acknowledge the Son, 2:23

Hold on to the truths you first learnt, 2:24

Reject the false teaching; you know the truth, 2:27

Continue in Christ, 2:28

Let your hope in Christ purify you, 3:3

Keep your sights on him and try not to sin, 3:6

Do not be led astray by false teachers, 3:7

Use your faith in God to conquer your sin, 3:9

Do what is right, 3:10

Love one another, 3:11, 3:23 and 4:7

Do not be like Cain, 3:12

Do not be surprised when the world hates you, 3:13

We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers, 3:16

Love with words and actions, 3:18

Have confidence before God, 3:21

Believe in the name of [God's] Son, Jesus Christ, 3:23

Obey his commands, 3:24

Do not believe every spirit, but test they come from God, 4:1

Do not hate your brother, 4:20

If you love God you must also love your brother, 4:21

Love God and carry out his commands, 5:2

Believe that Jesus is the Son of God and overcome the world, 5:5

Believe the testimony that God has given about his Son, 5:7

Believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life, 5:13

Ask anything according to his will, he hears us, 5:14

Pray for others, 5:16

Keep yourselves from idols, 5:21

2. Seeking out the assurances highlights the encouragement and reassurance he pours out in repeating the same themes in different words several times to help us remember them. Here are some I've found, I'm sure there are more. I've tried to put them under headings, but they do overlap.

- i) **Love:** *"God is love", 4:8;*
"love comes from God", 4:7;
The Father loves us, 3:1;
If you love your brother, you live in the light; 2:10;
"If we love one another, God lives in us," 4:12
"There is no fear in love", 4:18.

- ii) **Salvation:** The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin if we walk in the light. 1:2
"If we confess our sins, Christ is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." 1:9
"Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins". 2:2
"We know Christ died for us." 3:16
"God sent his son so we might live through him". 4:9

- iii) **Obedience:** Obey his commands and we will come to know him, 2:3
Obey his word and God's love is complete in us. 2:5
"The man who does the will of God lives for ever". 2:17
Those who do what is right are born of him. 2:29
Do what is right and be righteous like him. 3:7
He will give us what we ask, because we are obedient to his wishes. 3:22
"Those who obey his commands live in him and he in them". 3:24

- iv) **Trust:** *"Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God"*
4:2

- v) **Victory:** Faith in Christ overcomes the world. 5:4
All who are born of God overcome the world.

- vi) **Eternal life:** *He promised us eternal life. 2:25*
When Jesus returns we shall be like him. 3:4
He has given us his Spirit. 4:13
God has given us eternal life through his son.5:13
Christ keeps us safe. 5:18
We know we are in Christ. *"He is the true and eternal life." 5:20*

3. What to make of the final verse of this letter?

Gnosticism distorted the truth. John recognised that these people were inventing a god to suit what they wanted to believe. The god they worshipped, though not a graven image in the literal sense, was not the one and only true God. To worship the Gnostic god was idolatry. Christians might think Gnostic teaching a bit misguided, but not idolatrous. This warning puts things in a new, shocking light. This letter has been about knowing the true God. So it is wise to leave people with this stark warning ringing in their ears.

4. I'm happy to keep my key verse. It was 5:13, *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."*
5. I'm keeping my title, 'True Knowledge' as well. I think the warnings against false teaching are there throughout the letter; sometimes in the background, sometimes more prominent. Look at 4:18-19, in which I think John's distress and anxiety at the danger to the whole Church comes through so strongly.

Do think about and review your three principles, perhaps the listing of imperatives and assurances has helped you identify them more clearly.

Don't forget to reflect on any effects these three letters: 1 Peter, James and 1 John have had on your life.

Mary Thomas
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