

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

1 JOHN LESSON 2 (Chapters 3-5)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Ben Bailey:

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 Jn. 3:1). I’m Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

And I’m Timothy Sparks. Welcome to our study of the Book of 1 John. This lesson is being brought to you by individual members and congregations of the churches of Christ. The church of Christ in your area would like to invite you to stop by and visit with them. Study the Bible with them, and let them know that you are interested in spiritual matters. They would be glad to help you in any way possible. We, too, would like to help you in your study of the Bible. You can visit us on our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com, where you will find streaming audio and video lessons available. We also will be happy to provide you with a copy of any of our broadcasts on a CD or DVD. If you would like to have any of those, fill out the request form on our website, and we will be glad to send them to you free of charge.

Ben Bailey:

In 1 John 3-5, we learn that God is love, and that we are the children of God. Thus, we must walk in love. The principle here is that since God is the epitome of love, and since we are God’s people, then we ought to be people of love. John writes, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1). Even though we were unlovely and undeserving, God bestowed His love upon us anyway. Romans 5:6-8 illustrates this point.

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

We were not lovely, attractive, or worth dying for. Yet the fact remains that God still extended His love to us. Probably one of the most beautiful passages in all the Bible is John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Stop and consider the love of God, and the result of receiving God’s love in your life. If we do as 1 John 1-2 commands us (i.e., we walk in the light and love one another), then we have the love of God in our lives. How wonderful it is that we can be called “children of God”! The idea of being children of God is important, because before being children of God, we were children of the

devil. In John 8:44, Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." At some point, all of us have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Before we become a Christian, we are not a child of God; we are a child of the devil. The good news of the Gospel, however, is that if we obey God's Word, then we can become adopted children of God! Rather than being fatherless, we become a part of God's family. We are God's children, and as such, we will receive a "full inheritance."

Timothy Sparks:

In 1 John 3:2, John writes, "It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." In Philipians 3:21, Paul wrote that God "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." If we become, and remain, faithful children of God, there will come a time when we will spend eternity with God. John continues in verse 3 by saying, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." Here, John is alluding to the fact that Christians have the hope of eternal life with God. In the next verse, John discusses sin and the child of God when he says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." Sin is the transgression of the law of God. The word "sin" means "to miss the mark." When we sin, we are missing the mark (the goal) of God's requirements for us. In 1 John 2:1, John says that he is writing so that we may not sin. In chapter 3, John wants us to know that sin is lawlessness, and that we must not habitually live such a life. Paul made the same point when he inquired, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rm. 6:1). Grace is not intended to allow us to keep on sinning, but rather to have a relationship with God as we sin and repent.

Ben Bailey:

In 1 John 3:9, John says, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." This does not mean that we will never sin again. The original Greek text helps us understand what John is saying. The phrase "does not sin" is what is known as a "present-tense durative," which indicates continuing action. So, when John says that whoever has been born of God "does not sin," he means that we must not **continually** live a life of sin. John's comments are not intended to imply that we will **never again** sin. In Acts 8, Simon the sorcerer (who was a child of God) did sin. But he repented, confessed his sin, prayed, and was forgiven. The idea presented by John is not that we **will not** sin, but that we **should not live a life of sin**. If I am a child of God who is trying to be faithful to the Lord, I am not going to practice a life of sin. After we become a Christian, we cannot continue to live as we did in the past.

Timothy Sparks:

In order not to sin, we need to have God's word implanted in our hearts, which is why John says, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." Jesus, in Luke 8:11, said, "The seed is the Word of God." If God's Word ("the seed") abides in us, it will help us not to sin. In 1 John 3:8, John says, "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." The writer of the Book of Hebrews said, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Jesus

came for two reasons: (1) to destroy the work of the devil; and (2) to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10). In 1 John 3, we learn about an important battle that is taking place—a battle between Heaven and Hell, between God and Satan, between right and wrong, between sin and righteousness, between life and death. The text of 1 John 3 makes it clear that we as Christians must arm ourselves with the Word of God.

Ben Bailey:

In 1 John 3:16, John says, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Here, we learn that true love was expressed in Jesus’ sacrifice. How can we today know what true love is? We can know that because of the sacrifice that God made of His Son on our behalf. Jesus came to this Earth, lived a sinless life, and died a horrible death on the cross (Phil. 2:5-9). Through His sacrifice, we learn what true love is all about. Love is sacrificial in nature. If we are going to truly love, then we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for other Christians. Do we **really** believe that? Can we say, “I love my Christian brothers and sisters so much that, if need be, I would die for them”? This is what true love is all about. But do we often think in such terms? Such thinking takes us “out of our comfort zone.” But this is what true love is all about. In verse 17, John goes on to say, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” If we truly love our Christian family, then when a member of that family is in need, we ought to be willing to help in any way that we can. If a fellow Christian is suffering—perhaps he or she does not have food, shelter, or clothing—and I am able to help, but I do not, then that tells me that I do not love like God loves. God was **able** to help us—**and He did**. Thus, we ought to help one another. We need to help each other physically and spiritually, and do what we can to encourage growth in the kingdom of God. True love is not about just saying, “I love you.” Rather, it is about **showing** that love by our actions.

Timothy Sparks:

Love requires that we do our Father’s will. Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Earlier, in John 14:15, He said, “You are My friends if you do whatever I tell you.” John begins chapter 4 by saying, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (vs. 1). John urges us to make sure that the things we are being taught are judged by the Word of God. Fortunately, we can do that. We can be like the Bereans mentioned in Acts 17:11, of whom it was said, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” We need to be people who test everything against the standard of God’s Word. In this chapter, John addresses one of the false doctrines that was being taught in that day—the idea (which arose out of Gnosticism) that Jesus Christ had not really come in the flesh. Gnosticism (which became a full-blown heresy in the second century) taught that Jesus was Spirit, and that He was sinless. However, Gnosticism also taught that the flesh is inherently sinful. Thus, Jesus, Who was sinless, could not have inhabited a fleshly body, since the flesh is inherently sinful. John refutes such a false concept. In 1 John 1:1-3, he wrote,

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

John's point, of course, was that he and many others had seen, and experienced, Jesus in His earthly, bodily form. In 1 John 4:2-3, he writes,

“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”

John therefore identifies as “antichrists” those who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh.

Ben Bailey:

Anyone who teaches things that are unbiblical is teaching something that is “anti-Christ.” John, however, wants to encourage Christians. He therefore says in 1 John 4:4, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” This is such an encouraging passage for the child of God. We are “of God,” and one of the benefits that comes from that is the fact that the One Who is in us is greater than “he who is in the world.” We know who the phrase “he who is in the world” is addressing. It is “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4)—Satan. John's point is that God is greater than the devil (or any false teacher who might follow the devil). Thus, Christians are going to be winners in the end! The victory has been promised to us as Christians. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:57, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are on the winning side. Yes, at times we look around in this evil world, and it appears as if the devil is winning. But the battle has already been fought, and Christ has already won. That is made clear in Hebrews 2:14, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” When Jesus died on the cross, He delivered the deathblow to Satan. If we are Christians, and if we remain faithful, in the end we are going to win! The devil and his angels have a place of “everlasting darkness and judgment” reserved for them (Jude 6). Christians, however, will be able to inhabit eternity in Heaven with the God of light and love. If we remain on God's side, and if we remain true to Him and His Word, in the end, we will be winners.

Timothy Sparks:

John makes it clear in 1 John 4:7-8 that the fellowship we enjoy is based on love. He writes, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” In order to know God and be born of Him, we must be able to love. In verse 19 of this same chapter, John says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” The only reason we know how to love is because God seized the initiative and loved us first. Romans 5:8-9 teaches us the incredible nature of God's love.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

Ben Bailey:

As we enter into chapter 5, we see John saying, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him” (vs. 1). Verse 4 is very encouraging as well. John says, “For whatever is born of

God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” What is it that helps us overcome this world? How can we defeat the devil and remain true to God and His Word? It is through our faith—obedient trust in God. We already know from 1 John 4:4 that God is greater than the devil. If our faith is in God, then, it is little wonder that we will win the victory! In order to be a victor, we must first come to realize that we are in a battle. Every day of our lives, we are in a battle between Heaven and Hell. The devil wants you to be lost. God wants you to be saved. Think of it this way—God votes for you, the devil votes against you, and you get to cast the final ballot. You can make up your mind to be a child of God, and in so doing, **know** that you will win! But if you give in to sin and ungodliness, then you will be lost for all eternity in Hell with the devil. In order to go to Heaven, you **must** have a proper faith. Faith is obedience to the Word of God. Hebrews 11:6 says that “without faith, it is impossible to please God.”

Timothy Sparks:

In 1 John 5:3, John writes, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” Our victory comes through our faith in God, through our knowledge that we are borne of God, and that we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. John tells us about an open line of communication that we enjoy with God because we are in fellowship with Him. In 1 John 5:14-15, John writes, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” Christians can go to God in prayer and know that, if they are praying according to His will, He **will** hear them. If we have the assurance that He hears us, then we also can have the assurance that He will honor our requests. In Romans 8:32, Paul asked, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Paul’s point is that if God did not even spare His own Son on our account, will he then turn around and deny us the things we need? Of course not! God will honor our requests. But notify the qualifying statement—“if we ask anything according to His will.” Sometimes, we may not be asking in accordance with God’s will. And sometimes we may pray, but not have our prayers answered in the affirmative. Jesus prayed three times that the cup of sorrow should pass from Him, but He prayed, “Nevertheless, not My will, but Your will, be done” (Mt. 26:42). The Father’s will was for Christ to drink the cup of bitterness of the agony of the cross, and to bear our sins in His own body. Paul also prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh might be removed. The response from God, however, was “My grace is sufficient for you” (Col. 12:9). While the prayers of Jesus and Paul **were** answered, they were answered in the negative. The child of God can know that God **will** answer each request. But sometimes the answer may be, “No.” And sometimes the answer may be, “Wait a while.” Prayer is a wonderful blessing because it allows us to communicate with God and to make known to Him our requests.

Ben Bailey:

In 1 John 5:19, John says, “The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.” We need the avenue of prayer because of the wickedness that surrounds us. Being a Christian does not mean that we are immune to sin. But we do have tools available to us to help us in our battle—and one of the greatest of those is prayer. Look around the world in which we live, and see the lasciviousness, sinfulness, adultery, and idolatry. These types of things are all around us. How can the Christian overcome such things and remain true to God? One way to do that is through the avenue of prayer. Jesus taught us to never lose heart,

but instead to pray to God. Throughout the Bible, we are taught the value of prayer and how prayer can help us overcome the sinfulness of the world around us. Peter said, "Cast all your cares on the Lord, for he cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). If things in your life are not going as you think they should, maybe it is because you are not praying as often, or as fervently, as you ought to. We can **always** use more prayer time in our lives.

The Book of 1 John provides two basic lessons for us. Chapters 1-2 teach us that God is light, and the application is that because of that, we must walk in the light. Chapters 3-5 teach us that God is love, and that we must walk in the love of God. All of this comes together to teach us about true fellowship. What is true fellowship? It is walking in light and walking in love. If we walk in the light, and if we love as God has commanded us to love, then we will have true fellowship with God and with each other. If we act in any other way, we only deceive ourselves.

Timothy Sparks:

John closes this book with the command, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 Jn. 5:21). Idols are anything that dethrones God, and puts something else in His place. If "self" rules and reigns in your life, then God cannot. But if we will give God first place in our lives, and remove any and all idols (whatever they may be), then we can know that we have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:13).

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 JOHN LESSON 2 (CHAPTERS 3-5)

1. According to 1 John 3:1, God bestowed His love on us in a specific manner. What was that manner?
2. What is the overall theme of chapters 3 through 5 of 1 John?
3. In John 8:44, Jesus told the people of His day that they were not children of God, but were instead “someone else’s” children. Who was that “someone else”?
4. According to 1 John 3:2, what will the Christian’s post-resurrection body be like?
5. John said that “whoever has been born of God does not sin” (1 Jn. 3:9). Explain what John did **not** mean by that statement, and what he **did** mean.
6. In order **not** to sin, we need to have something implanted in our hearts. What is that “something”?
7. Jesus came for at least two reasons. What are they?
8. According to 1 John 3:16, we ought to love our Christian family so much that, if necessary, we would do something sacrificial for any member of that family. What is that “something sacrificial”?
9. In 1 John 3:17, John explained that if one Christian sees another Christian in need and does not help him, the one who refused to help is “missing something.” What is that “something”?
10. What did John mean when he wrote in 1 John 4:1, “Test the spirits”?
11. What does the doctrine of Gnosticism teach?
12. How did John refute the doctrine of Gnosticism in the epistle of 1 John?
13. According to 1 John 4:2-3, who did John identify in that context as the antichrist?
14. What is the “great encouragement” found in 1 John 4:4?
15. According to 1 John 4:7-8, upon what is all fellowship based?
16. John explains that “someone” is going to enjoy a victory (1 Jn 5:1). Who is that “someone”?
17. In 1 John 5:13, John said that we could know something with certainty. What is that “something”?
18. According to Romans 8:32, how much does God love us?
19. What is the key phrase in 1 John 5:14?