



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN: THAT YOU MAY KNOW THE TRUTH!

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The churches John had oversight of were turning from the truth, and follow the sinful societies of the day. The letters written to the seven churches in Asia Minor from Revelation 2-3 reveal this sad commentary. In fact, you may remember Timothy was the pastor serving the church at Ephesus. It was a church where some had begun to defect from the faith, including men in church leadership just as Paul had predicted from Acts 20:28-31. Persecution of Christians throughout the entire Roman Empire was well under way and probably because of the persecution believers faced, that caused much of the defection when commitment to Christ became costly.¹ Tradition has it that Timothy remained in Ephesus pastoring for many years. We know about 30 years later from Revelation 2:2-7, John records Jesus words to Ephesus regarding their condition, "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles, but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place..." Could John be referring to Timothy as the lampstand that was removed in these verses? It is thought that late in the first century, there was a public celebration held in Ephesus for the god Dionysius that involved public sinful acts. Timothy's heart was broken by these events and he stood up and started proclaiming the Gospel in opposition to the public display of sin. When he did, the mob became enraged and picked up clubs and stones, beating him till he died. Timothy would die before John. He took God's mandate seriously to "Preach the word" and it eventually cost him his life.

There is no sacrifice, mockery, alienation, rejection, imprisonment or even death too high a price to pay to put everything on the line for Christ. The importance and the rewards of a faithful life and ministry, not to mention the honor and glory of the Lord we trust and serve, far outweigh any personal sacrifice our trust and service may require.² May this be our passion and pursuit as we live each day we are given in this New Year! May the study of 1 John spur us on to giving all for the sake of the gospel.

I. 1 JOHN...THAT YOU MAY KNOW!

John spent three years with the other eleven disciples under the teaching of Jesus, preparing them for a life of ministry. John would later write about this time in his Gospel as a personal eyewitness account giving testimony to the truths about Jesus Christ as the Son of God Who came in the flesh, died on the cross bearing the penalty of sin and satisfying the

wrath of God, rose from the dead victorious over sin and death, ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of God the Father. John was an eyewitness to these truths. This is the good news of salvation offered to all who acknowledge their sin before a holy and righteous God and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation resulting in eternal life.

It would be these very truths that were coming under assault by false teachers with lofty speculations, causing true believers to question the validity of their faith. John could testify to the churches under his care that they could know with certainty the truths of their faith in Christ. And so he writes with the love and tenderness of a pastor, giving them assurance. He takes up his pen once again to defend the faith, writing 1 John.

John might have been the most powerful advocate for the truth. He was authoritative and clear, yet loving. His love for the brethren didn't lead him down a road of sentimentality and tolerance, but it was a love that took him down the road of truth. Telling the truth is the most loving thing you could ever do. John loved the truth, he loved the God of truth. He loved Jesus Christ so much that he spent his life telling people, lovingly, the absolute gospel truth.³ He writes that these believers may know, be assured and warned.

He writes to those who belong to Jesus and you can hear his father's heart. He writes with tenderness, love and affirmation, yet you hear the rumble of thunder in the background as he writes about deceivers and those against Christ. It is with love and thunder that he writes to protect his children, his family from deception that could darken their understanding if not warned.

II. 1 JOHN...PURPOSE IN WRITING!

This message is just as timely and relevant for us today, so let's see why John wrote this book. It's easy to discover his threefold purpose.

A. "THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE COMPLETE" - 1 JOHN 1:4

John wrote regarding error of course because there was a crisis of the truth. But his goal was to also write about the joy that the truth brings. John remember the words of his Lord from John 15:11, "These things I have spoken to, that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." Jesus spoke those words in the upper room just before going to the cross. How could that be joy in any way? Yet Jesus taught John that His real goal was not just the truth, but the joy that the truth produces. The

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1 JOHN...THAT YOU MAY KNOW THE TRUTH!

absolute and certain truth brings full and complete joy. In the midst of suffering, persecution, and deception. John brings the black and white truth so they can know that their faith is genuine and thus their joy would be full instead of living in fear and confusion. *This study will increase our joy!*

B. "THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN" – 1 JOHN 2:1

Why did John write? He says it plain and simple, "My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin." John's second purpose is for holiness. How often had John heard Jesus Christ say to others, "Go and sin no more"? Have we not been redeemed for holiness? If we are truly believers, we have been redeemed for the purpose of holiness. Did not Christ do that transforming work of holiness in John's life? And so John writes that we may not sin. John never tolerated deception and lies but was always committed to the truth. He never tolerated sin. John's purpose in writing was the same as his Lord's; for joy and holiness. *This study will increase our awareness of sin and desire for holiness!*

C. "TO KNOW YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE"- 1 JOHN 5:13

John wrote, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." That's clear and simple. John is straightforward and direct. He wants them to know they have eternal life. John wanted to eliminate their sadness and replace it with joy. He wanted to eliminate their sin and replace it with holiness. And he wants to eliminate their doubt replacing it with knowing, with assurance through the truth. He reminds them of Jesus words that those who believe in Him will have eternal life. (John 3:15-16)

The intent of John's letter was so these beloved believers would have full joy, would turn from sin to holiness, and have full assurance and confidence in the truth they have been taught from the beginning. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John writes to teach believers truths that will give them full joy, holiness and a settling assurance about their salvation.

Now we too sit at the Apostle's feet many generations later. He writes demanding submission and obedience to Jesus Christ from his flock, his family. He is committed to establishing the absolute truth in the mind of his readers but he gives it with a tenderness and love because he was tempered by Christ. We learn the truth without compromise because John was committed to it with a heart of love. The priority is a balance of truth proclaimed in love. *This study will*

increase our assurance in the truth claims of Jesus Christ that we may know what we believe and have a settled assurance!

III. THREE TESTS TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE!

John wrote his Gospel to those not yet believers and his purpose was to lead them to faith in Christ. John then wrote his Epistles to lead believers to a deeper understanding of their faith and greater confidence in that which they already possessed. In his Epistle, John emphasizes the intimate connection between Christian faith and conduct. True knowledge involves holiness of life and conduct. And John also wants to challenge presumption, thus wisely gives three tests by which anyone who claims to be a believer can examine themselves.⁴

A. TEST #1: DOCTRINAL TEST – 1 JOHN 3:23, 4:2, 5:5, 10, 13

Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe that Christ came in the flesh?

B. TEST #2: MORAL TEST – 1 JOHN 2:1-6

Do you obey the commands of God? Obedience is the mark of the Christian life.⁵

C. TEST #3: LOVE TEST – 1 JOHN 2:10

Do you love the people of God?

What is a real Christian? How do we know we have the real thing? John wrote this first letter to answer these questions. Many times throughout his letter John says, "this is how we know" John puts our profession of faith to the test. He writes his letter to those who are confused and want to know if they have gotten ahold of the real thing.⁶

What about you? Do you have the real thing? Put your profession of faith to the test to answer that question. Are you a real believer? Is your faith matched by a conduct that reveals its genuineness?

¹ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.165-166.

² MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.54-55.

³ MacArthur, John, *John MacArthur Sermon Tape Series: 1 John*. Grace to You: Valencia, CA, 2002. Tape #1.

⁴ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg.22

⁵ O'Donnell, Douglas Sean, *Reformed Expository Commentary: 1-3 John*. P&R Publishing Company: Phillipsburg, NJ, 2015. Pg.14.

⁶ Dever, Mark, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept*. Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2005. Pg.473.