

John and his ministry

Part 3

Speaker	Eugene Vedder
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[00:00:01] We took up the whole Gospel of John, but we couldn't get to all the details of it, of course. This afternoon, since we did so well this morning, we're going to take up three books, at least in this session. We'll take up the epistles of John, and again, we'll be doing quite a bit of skimming.

Hopefully, our appetites get whetted, so that we dig some more ourselves.

We've mentioned already that the writings of John, as far as we know, all date from the latter part of his long, fruitful life for the Lord. Probably all written in the 90s A.D.

You know, the Apostle Paul was martyred approximately 64, 66 A.D., 67 A.D., somewhere in there.

[00:01:02] So, the Apostle Paul was with the Lord about a quarter of a century already, when the Apostle John writes his epistles. The Apostle Paul, you know, to him, there were a number of things entrusted to him that were mysteries that had not been revealed previously.

And the biggest of these, I suppose we should say, is the mystery of the Church, the relationship between Christ and the Church. We have the Lord's coming, the rapture, and so on. Also, there are a number of things that he speaks of as the Lord having given him from heaven. The Apostle Peter emphasizes the kingdom, the kingdom of God.

The Apostle John writes very late in life.

He writes for believers, at least his epistles are particularly for believers. [00:02:05] And he's writing, presenting the family of God.

Now, let's read in the first epistle of John. We'll read in the first chapter a few verses. Let's read. And the light has been manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and report to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has been manifested to us. [00:03:04] That which we have seen and heard, we report to you that ye also may have fellowship with us.

And our fellowship is indeed with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we to you that your joy may be full.

Here we find a portion of the aim of the book, and this is really John's introduction.

Three times in Scripture we find a book beginning with the beginning.

Genesis 1.1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

John 1.1, in the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [00:04:07] And now, in 1 John, we read of that which was from the beginning. But each of the beginnings are really different beginnings. John 1.1 takes us back farthest.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And you know, we can't go back any farther than that. Whatever we can go back to, to the beginning, the Word was.

The Word was with God, the Word was God.

And Moses tells us in the 90th Psalm, from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

So, you know, we can never get back to the beginning of God, because in the beginning, God was there. [00:05:05] Genesis 1.1 takes us back to the beginning of this creation.

In the beginning, God, who was already there, created heaven and earth.

And, you know, there are various theories as to what happened next.

But, and of course, many theories even as to how things started. The date for that beginning has been set by some scientists at 15 billion years ago, right or wrong. You know, it seems that when it comes to the scientific theories as to the age of the earth, every 20 years, the age of the earth has doubled.

You know, you don't want to go too much by what man says. [00:06:03] Man takes his guess. He hopes it's an educated guess.

But what God says in his Word is definite and not to be questioned. And there we read in Genesis that in the beginning, God created. Now what we have here in the epistle of John is the beginning, shall we say, of Christianity.

Shall we, I'm using terms a little bit loosely here.

We might say the beginning of the new creation. That which was from the beginning.

And he says that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes. Actually, you know, the Lord Jesus goes back as we've seen in John 1.1. At the very beginning of anything we can go back to, he was already there. But John is now going to speak of the beginnings really of Christianity.

[00:07:02] And he, you know, it began with Christ.

John loves to speak of Christ.

And he says, which we have heard.

Now we weren't at the beginning in John 1.1.

We were not at the beginning in Genesis 1.1. And at the time of writing, the apostle John was the last one left here who was at the beginning of what he's writing about.

And he's pointing out not just a time, but he's pointing to a person with whom this new creation that we enjoy has begun.

The person around whom Christianity centers.

And he says we've heard that which was from the beginning. We've seen with our eyes.

[00:08:02] And again, he uses that term, and I like this term in the Darby translation, and I'm sticking with the Darby translation in these talks on John, that which we contemplated.

We spent time thinking about it, about him.

We've contemplated.

And our hands handled. Art brought this before us this morning when it came to the resurrection and the Lord standing before his disciples. Well, you know, touch me and see. The spirit has not flesh and bone such as I have. Well, before the crucifixion as well as after the resurrection, the disciples had the opportunity physically to touch the Lord Jesus. And we saw that John lay on his breast.

John was in his bosom, lying on his breast, [00:09:02] and was, I believe, really the physical, practically leaning against the Lord as they were together at the Last Supper. In his bosom, it would speak of that place of affection. You know, physically we can lean on someone's breast and still perhaps be far from them in thought, but John was both.

But here he speaks about which our hands have handled, concerning the word of life.

And the second verse is a parenthesis here. The life has been manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and report to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has been manifested to us.

Isn't this wonderful?

The eternal life which was with the Father. [00:10:03] It took me a long time to learn that eternal life doesn't just mean to exist forever. Because the unbeliever is never said to have eternal life, but once a human life begins, it goes on forever.

Any person born into this world will continue to exist forever, either with the Lord, in glory and bliss, or in eternal condemnation in hell.

But eternal condemnation in hell is spoken of as the second death, and not ever as eternal life.

Eternal life, the Lord Jesus says in John 17, this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. And you know the word knowing, as it's used in Scripture, [00:11:02] generally denotes more than knowing about.

You know, Adam, when God brought Eve to him, in fact, actually after they were expelled from the garden, we find that Adam knew Eve, his wife, and a child resulted from this.

So the knowledge, knowing in Scripture, is usually something much more intense than knowing about.

It speaks of a relationship. Adam knew his wife, there was a relationship there, and there were consequences of that relationship. And while our relationship with the Lord Jesus isn't the sexual relationship of a husband and wife, it is an intimate relationship.

And this is life eternal that they might know thee, [00:12:01] the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. And the thought there is not only knowing who he is and knowing something about him, but of being in relationship with the only true God and with Jesus Christ. That is the essence of eternal life. Yes, it goes on forever. Thank God for that.

But it's a relationship that continues forever, a loving and appreciated relationship.

Any relationship of knowing a human being, in the sense that Scripture uses the term, ultimately comes to an end.

But this relationship that we have with God the Father and with the Lord Jesus, thank God, will never end. And there are songs that say sweeter as the days go by.

Well, the Apostle John, as an old man, [00:13:01] meditating on these things, he mentions the wonder of it, the eternal life which was with the Father and has been manifested to us.

We have this opened up before us.

You know, it took several years of walking with the Lord Jesus for these disciples to come to know him and to appreciate him. And John had lived on perhaps 65 years beyond that before he writes here.

And he's still speaking of that eternal life has been manifested to us.

And it's not something that one just quickly grasped. We may be saved in an instant, but we have a lot of growing to do in our appreciation of the Lord Jesus.

[00:14:01] But now we come to his purpose here in verse 3. He says, that which we have seen and heard, we report to you. Now remember, John is the last of the 12 apostles left. And others have gone on.

False teachers have come in.

We spoke of the Gnostics this morning. I mentioned them, Art mentioned them too from a couple of

different directions. And these people, we find in the first epistle of John how there was a denying of the real deity of the Lord Jesus.

Oh, you know, you went to God through a series of intermediate beings. But we have the Son of God who is himself God and a direct relationship with him. And they denied the incarnation of the Son of God too.

[00:15:04] That Jesus Christ was come in flesh.

You know, that he was there. He was a person from eternity past. He's the eternal Son and he's come in the flesh.

You know, there are people today who will teach you that Jesus became the Son of God when he was born into this world. And there are others who say that, well, at his baptism he received the Christ consciousness. Or, you know, when he was a boy at age 12 he was awakening to a sense of who he really was. And he said, I must be about my father's business. This is nonsense and it's worse than nonsense. It's blasphemous teaching about the person of the Lord Jesus.

Well, John is writing really to combat that kind of teaching as one who had personally known the Lord Jesus, [00:16:01] had personally been called to follow him, had personally enjoyed the relationship with him. He is writing for the benefit of those whom he calls little children. And he uses that term and unfortunately our King James Bible has the translation of children and sons and little children. It really has it messed up. In this way, I again would recommend the Darby translation when it comes to a very careful distinguishing of these terms.

Because the King James translators, one of their instructions, sad to say, was the instruction that a high school teacher will give the class when it comes to writing a theme. Don't overwork any one word.

Use a variety of words. Use synonyms. I mean, there's good instruction for writing high school themes. But when it comes to translating, it's not good instruction. Often commented when I was a boy in Kenosha, [00:17:02] a visiting brother once came and gave ministry one Sunday afternoon on the difference between judgment and condemnation and damnation in the Gospel of John. Unfortunately, the brother only had read his King James Bible. It confused the brethren there who were accustomed to the JND because there's only one word in the Greek translated by these three words which the translators of the King James used as synonyms. But it was utter confusion in the ministry that afternoon as the brother sought to bring out the difference between these terms. And, you know, even as a boy, I could recognize something was wrong. But we appreciate a careful translation.

And John is using a term in most of his address to the children [00:18:03] that is what we call a diminutive, really, dear children. And, you know, it doesn't have to do with how old they are or how mature they may be, but it's a term of affection. There is an area in the epistle where he distinguishes Christians by their growth, by their spiritual maturity. There it's, we have children, we have young men, we have fathers.

But the general term that he uses is a term of affection. And John does not use the term sons, which Paul loves to use.

Paul loves to present us in the dignity of sonship, the dignity of our relationship.

And, you know, this is my son and I'm proud of him, in that sense. And this is how he speaks of adoption, too, [00:19:03] because the Roman not only could adopt a baby as we would, take a baby into his home and raise it as his child, but there was a technical term among the Romans that when a Roman man who was the pater familias, the father of the family, the head of the house, when he felt his son had grown mature enough that he could handle things, that he was a man, then he would take him to the proper authorities and declare, this is my son.

Well, he had been his child all along, had been under tutors and governors and so on, as Galatians tells us. But the time came, hopefully, in the life of a boy when his father would declare, this is my son. That was called adoption by the Romans. And that is really the sense in which Paul often uses the term, [00:20:02] that we are declared sons, that we come into the privilege and dignity of sonship, and such a son was then an heir, too.

Well, John doesn't use that term. John uses a term, generally speaking, that indicates that we have been born into the family, that there is an intimate relationship.

It's not the dignity, it's the relationship that he stresses. Now, here he goes on to say in verse 3, that which we have seen and heard, we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.

And our fellowship is indeed with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

John says, we, not just the plural of majesty, as they would tell you grammatically speaking, but though the other apostles had gone on to be with the Lord, [00:21:05] essentially their message was the same. And I believe they all would have wanted to communicate the same truth. John is the last one to be able to express it, but he wants to report this which they had seen and heard.

You know, seeing and hearing comes out in the early chapters in Acts. The Lord had said to his own, just before he left them, ye shall be witnesses unto me.

You shall be my witnesses.

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth.

And when they're called on the carpet, in what name, in what power did you heal this lame man?

It was in the name of Jesus.

And they bear witness to the fact that this Jesus, whom the Jewish leaders had taken and had crucified, [00:22:03] God had raised him up. God had exalted him.

And it was through him that there was salvation and none other. And John is still using these type of terms, that which we have seen and heard we report to you.

That ye also may have fellowship with us.

Here we have the apostles' fellowship. And the apostles' fellowship is based on something concrete.

You know, we have the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and the breaking of bread, and prayers, Acts 2.42.

And you can't have fellowship if you're not standing on the same doctrinal footing. And that's one of the sad things that is, you know, present-day Christianity tries to gloss over it. Don't talk about doctrine at all. Let's just have fellowship together. But you can't have real fellowship [00:23:03] if there isn't that which we hold doctrinally in common.

And John is passing on these things. He says, our fellowship is indeed with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Why does he say our fellowship is with the Father? The Father delights in his Son, the Lord Jesus. The Father finds all his joy in him. And when we learn to find our joy in the Lord Jesus, when we really learn to appreciate him, we have fellowship with the Father. John had learned to share a common object with God the Father.

But he doesn't limit it to that. He says, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

You know, the Lord Jesus, delighted in the Father, delighted in presenting him, manifesting the Father. And the Lord Jesus was on good speaking terms with his Father. Early in the morning, before daybreak, [00:24:02] he would rise up and go and pray. And we find him praying through the night sometimes. You know, he was in constant communion with his Father. And he's the one who made the Father known to his followers.

And as we were reminded this morning, before leaving, right after his resurrection, he sent Mary Magdalene to tell the disciples, I send to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

The one whom he rejoiced in, the one whom he had fellowship with, his disciples could now also fellowship with. And John says, I want to share all this with you so that you can have fellowship with us. And this is the fellowship that we already enjoy. [00:25:02] You know, many times, sad to say, when we talk about fellowship, and we use terms like he's in fellowship, or he's not in fellowship yet, we use these terms in an altogether different sense from how Scripture uses them.

And being in fellowship means far more than that he takes part in the breaking of bread. And I think we really need to be more careful of how we use terminology, especially the terminology that Scripture uses, that we don't narrow it down and make it mean something that Scripture doesn't make it mean. The apostle writes in verse 4, These things write we to you, that your joy may be full.

That's the object of this book.

These things write we to you, that your joy may be full. [00:26:02] He's already said that you may have fellowship with us. Now he's going to write about the Father and about the Son. He's going to write about these things that are essential if we want to fellowship with the apostles who fellowship with the Lord Jesus and who fellowship with the Father. And the end goal of fellowship here is joy, that your joy may be full.

And he's writing that to people here on earth. We realize that when we're in heaven, our joy will be full, and we're looking forward to that. We're looking forward to the resurrection or the rapture, whichever comes first for us. We all would like to see the rapture come first, but it'll bring us into God's presence.

In thy presence is fullness of joy. At thy right hand, pleasures forevermore.

But on the other hand, we can enjoy full joy, [00:27:04] according to this epistle, here already.

And it's one of the objects with which John is writing. Chapter 5 mentions another distinct object for which he's writing.

Verse 13 of chapter 5, he's coming toward the conclusion of the letter. He says, These things have I written to you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, who believe on the name of the Son of God.

You know, there's a lot of confusion about this in the world today.

And there are so many, many who are dear children of God, I believe, who teach that you can be saved and that you can be lost again. [00:28:01] And you may have to be saved over again. This 13th verse of 1 John 5, ought to settle the matter once for all. And there are quite a few other verses that back it up. But this is one of the purposes with which John wrote. He didn't want Christians to be in doubt.

Those who believe on the name of the Son of God can know that they have eternal life.

Really a patriarch in Jamaica.

He lived to be 94.

He was saved, I believe, when he was 21.

He spent over 70 years in the Lord's service. He was a pharmacist by profession. And the Lord used him to begin several assemblies down there. The early years when I would visit down there, Brother Eddie was already a patriarch. And, you know, one appreciated so much [00:29:02] a man like this who knew and appreciated these things.

But he often referred to 1 John 5 as the verses that gave him assurance. The verses just before this. That if we, you know, accept the witness of people, the witness of man.

Verse 9, if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For this is the witness of God, which he has witnessed concerning his Son. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself. He that does not believe God has made him a liar. Because he has not believed in the witness which God has witnessed concerning his Son. This is what the Lord used to speak to that brother when he was a young man. You know, he realized with all the upbringing he had had, well, it's preposterous to think that you can assert I have eternal life, I will not be lost, and so on.

[00:30:01] If he would follow that kind of teaching, humble as it might sound to men, he was calling God a liar. And if we can take man's word for something, certainly we can take God's word for something. And when God says the one who believes in his Son has eternal life, we've got to take God's word for it. I had the privilege once of traveling with Brother Eddie to the Bahamas and sharing a room with him. I was in my 20s and he was in his 80s at the time.

It was a real learning experience. A few days together where there wasn't much to do during the day but to draw on the wisdom of an old brother like that was a real privilege.

Well, so these are some of the aims of the Apostle in this book.

When we get to the other two epistles of John, the second and the third, two very short books, [00:31:04] we find that these are epistles addressed to individuals.

The second epistle is to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth and not I only, but also all who have known the truth. The third epistle is addressed to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

And both of these epistles speak about receiving and not receiving.

The sister and her children are instructed whom they are not to receive in their home.

You know, as Christians, we're told to love one another and love is something that is much stressed and particularly in the writings of John.

Well, in these little letters, we read about love in truth.

And love isn't just this sticky, smeary stuff [00:32:03] that just covers everything and that is emotional and sentimental and so on, but love in truth is something different. And if someone comes, the sister is instructed, who doesn't bring sound doctrine as to the person of Christ, but someone who may think he's got some advanced knowledge that nobody else has and he's learned a little bit more and so on, don't receive him, don't have anything to do with him. Don't even show him the common courtesy of, you know, the greetings that would express fellowship in any way. And third John is the balance.

In third John, there are brethren who have gone out for the namesake. They're not looking for anything from the heathen, but they're really out to make Christ known and if these come, by all means receive them and help them along. There was a brother in the assembly where this Gaius went. [00:33:03] I don't know if he was allowed to be in fellowship anymore, at the point he got the letter, but there was a brother, a man in that assembly, I'll say, Diotrephes, who wouldn't receive these traveling brethren, who traveled through.

And anyone who received them, he was going to toss them out of the assembly. He was a man who loved to have the preeminence. Colossians 1 tells us, of the Lord Jesus, that in all things he must have the preeminence. And whenever a man wants the preeminence, whenever a man wants to run things in the assembly, he's wanting the place that the Lord Jesus alone is worthy of and should have. And, you know, we have a problem there. So, while on the one hand John writes a letter to a woman and her children, whom they are not to receive, not even into their home, he writes another letter to emphasize [00:34:03] who should be received and that you do this even if there's some brother who's taking a place out of place and who's trying to forbid you to do it. And, you know, the third epistle of John is probably one of the most important epistles as to what the individual is to do if things in the assembly are not in order because some brother is taking a place that is out of place. Well, then the individual, you know, John doesn't say, Gaius, you leave that assembly. He doesn't say that.

But he tells, he commends him for doing what is right and he tells him to go on doing what is right. And, of course, John was an apostle. The last of the apostles, he was going to come himself and face this man down. This man wouldn't even receive John's writings. So John was going to come personally and face him down on this. But that is the basic object of those two letters.

[00:35:06] And while they are short, scriptural teaching wouldn't be complete without them. They're very important for teaching.

Well, as far as the structure of the first letter of John, we'll go back to that for a moment. The first part of the chapter, the part we read, really deals with eternal life and its manifestation.

Manifestation in Christ.

This is life eternal that you might know, they might know thee the only true God in Jesus Christ whom thou hast met.

And John is bringing this out as we've seen. The next portion, beginning with verse 5, we have fellowship.

All right.

He's expressed already in verse 3 [00:36:01] that ye also may have fellowship with us. Well, what is fellowship? Does it mean that a person is allowed to break bread? Breaking of bread is not mentioned in this epistle at all. And like I say, we have used terms in a way that scripture doesn't use them many times. But if we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. And so on.

We saw in the Gospel of John these three L's in our language. I'm not sure what they start with in Greek. I don't know Greek. I'm sorry. Not like art. He studied it. But in English, fortunately, there are three L's.

There's life, there's light, and there's love.

Nowadays, as far as man is concerned, well, the first one is at his disposal.

[00:37:02] He can destroy it if he wants it. Even before it comes out of the womb, he can take the light. This is what man thinks he can do. And if man rejects the light, the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John already spoke about those who men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil and so on. They won't come to the light. And so men are going to love all over the place. Smile, God loves you.

Well, thank God he does. And we can smile about it. But, you know, to tell the unsaved person that, yes, God loves you.

That we can tell the unsaved person. But to simply smile, that's not enough.

The unsaved person needs to repent and come to know the Lord Jesus. And so on.

But, you know, love has been brutally misused.

[00:38:01] And it's a very popular word in the world today. And a word that is used in ways far different from how Scripture uses it. And here in the first epistle of John, where we read much about love, we begin really with the fact that God is light. And in him is no darkness at all. Before we're going to talk about God being love, and, you know, there are many people who like to talk about God being love, like to put up a big plaque, God is love.

It's a good scriptural expression.

Find it in this very book. But very seldom do you see the term that goes with it and that really comes first, God is light.

Man doesn't want that. And to have God being love at the expense of being light is quite a distortion.

[00:39:04] Well, we have conditions of fellowship and how far we can get from it.

We need to walk in the light as he is in the light. Then we have fellowship one with another. Not just if he's asked to break bread and brethren have visited him or have recommended him to the assembly and he's been received, then we have fellowship one with another. Our fellowship is based really on common life, but then on, excuse me, on a common walking in the light.

And then the question of sin, saying we have no sin, well, it points out we deceive ourselves. It's very hard to convince anybody else that I have no sin and to convince God of it would be rather foolish, but some people have very foolishly convinced themselves.

[00:40:02] And if you withstand them in that, they'll usually get very angry and it doesn't take long before it's obvious to everyone but themselves that what they have is more than righteous anger.

Well, we find that John writes in chapter 2, verse 1, these things I write to you in order that ye may not sin. You might say that is also an object of the book.

If anyone sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, someone who takes up our cause, someone greater than ourselves who takes up our cause. We can go to him and notice we have a patron with the Father.

In the Gospel of John, it's a matter of that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God, [00:41:04] believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name. The Gospel of John is written to reach out, and it's often passed out because it's the Gospel. The Epistle is written to children. It's written to the family of God, and when it deals with sin, it doesn't say you need to be saved. It says you need to confess your sin, and it says you've got an advocate with the Father, a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and this sin that has temporarily interrupted or broken or marred your communion, your fellowship, it needs to be dealt with. It needs to be taken care of. Not that you need to be saved over again, that you've lost your salvation, but you simply confess your sin. It doesn't even say you need to ask to have it forgiven. [00:42:03] No, if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and it tells us if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father. Now, it was interesting to me years ago when I first got into this book, and this is one of the last books in the New

Testament that I got into to any degree.

It was a book that always frightened me as a young Christian. The one book that was dreadful to me was 1 John because I had struggled for some years with assurance of salvation.

My dear mother didn't help the situation.

I was saved when I was about six or seven years old and then I'd get into a fight with my brothers or talk back to my parents or something like this, and my mother would say, and you say you're a Christian. Is that the fruit of the Spirit?

[00:43:04] It wasn't the fruit of the Spirit, but it didn't change the fact that I was a Christian. But it really made me doubt it many times and for several years I struggled with that. I went to the Lord practically every night. Oh, Lord, you know I came to you then and then, but if I didn't come the right way, I'm coming now. And you said, Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out. I don't know how many years, I do know approximately how many years, but how many times I came to the Lord with that verse before the real impact of the verse came home to me. But John is writing to children and he's writing on the subject of fellowship and that fellowship is to be restored.

I see I'm running out of time a lot faster than I thought I was. I'm sorry. But he takes up, after dealing with these things, [00:44:03] the question of the world, the Christian's enemy, and he takes that up in connection with the stages of growth in the Christian's life in chapter 2.

Then he goes into, now are we children of God?

In chapter 3, Art had us there this morning, and the world doesn't know us.

What we shall be hasn't been manifested yet, hasn't been made known so that we can see it, but we have this assurance that we're going to be like him. And I appreciate how the resurrection is tying in with the writings of John. And again, John is very practical. Everyone that has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure.

Eventually we come in chapter 4 to the fountain of love. [00:45:03] We find that love hasn't originated with us. We take credit for so much many times, but we find in chapter 4 verse 7 that we're to love one another because love is of God, and everyone that loves has been begotten of God and knows God. And these verses, they were hard for me as a boy.

As I was saying before, John writes in absolutes, and this is the problem that we often have with John. And then this is one of the poorest translated books in the commonly used King James Bible. Of all the New Testament books, this is one you really have to get some help on because committing sin and so on, these terms that are used are a bad translation in terms of our present-day language.

[00:46:02] Well, I would commit a sin, yes.

And did that mean I had lost my salvation or I wasn't saved? Was the evidence that I wasn't really saved and so on? I had to learn what it meant to live that kind of a life. And the fact that John, dealing with absolutes, he is saying the person who is a Christian has a new nature. Peter says he's been made partaker of the divine nature. And that new nature cannot sin.

But the person who has the new nature, unfortunately, still has the old nature. And this question of two natures, while it isn't taken as such here in John, but it is very important that one understand that in order to appreciate the epistle of John. Because, you know, he says, these things I write to you that you may not sin, but if any man sins. [00:47:03] A Christian doesn't sin. A Christian never sins. A Christian cannot sin. As a Christian.

You know, what he is before God with the new nature. But the person who is a Christian, unfortunately, is still quite capable of sinning. And in fact, that old nature often enjoys it. And this is the struggle. And when John says, you know, can and can't and so on, he's speaking in absolute terms. He's speaking about a person in virtue of what they are before God in the new nature. And yet he's dealing with persons who are still here and who, unfortunately, have the other nature too. And if we don't realize that, we're really going to have problems with the first epistle of John. Well, he winds up his epistle with some very important things about faith and about getting the victory. [00:48:01] And as I said, he deals with children of God, loving the children of God, the new nature, being God's nature.

You know, we're partakers of the divine nature. That new nature can't help but love the children of God. Can't help but love the brother. Now, I may not like the brother at all, but I love him.

And, you know, we sometimes struggle with these things. Well, these are some of the things that John writes. And he points out, especially at the beginning of chapter 2, early verses there, that what we call believing and what Scripture calls believing has the element of obeying.

Paul mentions this in Romans 2. He speaks about obedience of faith. Well, John, you know, believing isn't just saying, I believe, and it has intellectually entered my head somehow, but it involves a commitment of life. [00:49:01] It involves what we speak of as obeying.

John stresses the word to know.

We can know, we can have certainty about something.

And John points out in chapter 2, in these well-known verses, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, and all that is of the world, or in the world rather, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. John is the one who teaches us very definitely that the antithesis between the Father and the world.

You know, the devil is the enemy of the Lord Jesus. The world tries to replace the Father in giving to the believer, in offering to the believer, in alluring the believer, and the spirit and the flesh have constant battle, constant problems, one with the other.

[00:50:04] Well, unfortunately, we're about at the end of the hour.

Just would say yet in connection with 2 and 3 John, 2 John is not written, there's no mention of the assembly as such, but to the individual Christian, and even a sister, a sister with children, we would assume a widowed sister, she is to use this kind of judgment, the Lord must be first.

Faithfulness to him.

This is true love. Love in truth doesn't make exceptions where there is someone who does not bring sound doctrine as to the person of Christ.

And John emphasizes in both these epistles how he appreciates his children, his spiritual children, [00:51:03] and we certainly can apply it to literal children as well, walking in truth.

You know, as parents, one of the things we appreciate about our children, and it's one of the griefs of heart of many parents, where the children are not walking in the truth. One of the things that makes parents pray. Well, John is speaking of those to whom he stood in relationship as an older one. He doesn't speak with apostolic authority here, but he addresses them as the elder. And, you know, he has a love, an interest in younger believers, not simply for they're saved, they'll go to heaven, fine, get out the next one, no, but that they walk in truth. And Gaius in the third book is commended for this walk in truth.

We have the two men mentioned toward the end of the epistle, [00:52:04] Diotrephes, whom we've mentioned, who we might say was one of the early ones in the, shall we say, clergy running things and kicking out anyone who didn't want things the way he wanted them run. The contrast is Demetrius, who has witnessed born to him by all and by the truth himself. And so on, he was one who did what was good. And John makes these very simple statements, very absolute statements. He that does good is of God.

He that does evil has not seen God.

Does it as a practice, as a way of life, not the person who may slip and fall at some time.

But good is always of God.

Evil is never of God.

And so on.

Well, we must obey the Lord regardless of [00:53:02] what leader says what.

And that is the lesson in this third epistle of John.

So I think we'll leave these epistles here, hopefully to study them more ourselves. Shall we pray?