

Note

1 John – Part 1 of 1

Summary

The one true God who created every single ion into existence is also the great I AM who promised His everlasting love to mankind. If there is just one word to describe Him and His nature, it would be LOVE. God is love personified in Jesus Christ. Love that is beyond man's definition, understanding and rational; wherein the Creator became the creation to redeem it from eternal condemnation and restore it to eternal fellowship as heirs.

John reiterates that the children of God are partakers of this divine love; we are born again in Spirit; we abide in Christ; we resist sin and demonstrate His agape love through our dealings with others. As unique His Love is His Triune nature; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And when His Trinity is the center of our lives – our joy is complete.

Transcript

1 Peter – Part 1 of 1

Today we come to the 1st Epistle of John, commonly called 1 John.

Now, in a sense this is not really an epistle; it doesn't have the characteristics of an epistle; it is not addressed to anyone in particular under the usual greetings, Salutations. It's more like a fatherly sermon to his people, and like a warning of some things that are happening.

Now let's look at his background. The apostle John was already very old. He was probably in his 80s at this time. He had already written the Gospel of John before this. And then after writing this epistle, he was exiled by the Romans to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation.

So at this point, the old apostle John was residing in Ephesus. And he was supervising a network of churches in the area. When there was a crisis in the churches, he was too old to visit them so he wrote this letter.

The crisis arose because there was a group that denied that Jesus came as hundred percent human. Now the Greek philosophy separates things very clearly. The Greek mind draws very clear lines, and that's how we tend to think. The Greeks believe that there's a huge separation between God and man, the spiritual and the so-called secular. And if Jesus claims to be God, then how can he be man?

There's a line between that. So they were probably teaching that God came down in the appearance of a man. He was not really man, just looked like a man.

Now, if that is so, then how could the death on the cross make any sense to us? We need a substitute. A man has to die for a man. Strictly speaking, if he's God, he never really died. God cannot die. So the whole cross becomes zero effect.

The power of the cross is that Jesus is hundred percent God and hundred percent man. And this is of course impossible to figure out in the human mind. It is to be believed by simple faith. The incarnation of Jesus Christ - 100% God became 100% man at the same time! He was both!

But the Greek mind cannot accept that. So they denied that Jesus was really man, which makes the cross of no effect, and there were other ways the Greek mind tried to juggle this fact of the incarnation.

Many people still struggle with this fact. How can it be! In fact, if you ask most Christians, Is Jesus 100% God and 100% man - they are almost stunned by your question, they never even thought about it. But that's the truth, it has to be. But in our mind, our so-called educated mind, where everything is linear, there is a clear division.

We also struggle with this. So there were these people who denied that Jesus really came in the flesh, God come in the flesh (later we will see what their variations of this). And so they left the church because the others believed that Jesus is 100% man also though He's God. So this was the crisis.

Because of his age, John could not go to the churches to explain, so he wrote this letter, more like a sermon, to be read in the different churches around.

John's style is very circular too. He's not like the Apostle Paul who was very educated, very trained. He grew up in a very Greek kind of environment, and in those days all educated people were educated the Greek style. Greek philosophy was dominant.

John was a fisherman. He lived by the shores of Galilee and he was Jewish. The Jewish mind is more circular. So his writing is quite difficult to understand.

I just want you to note that the word "relationship" appears about 30 times in this little letter. The purpose of this book is that we will have fellowship-Koinonia, a better word is partnership with God.

The letter begins in a very strange way -
Chapter 1 ESV

verse 1: That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which you have looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

What an opening! That which we have seen and touched-His flesh. He's not appearing like a man. He is really man.

verse 3: That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

verse 4: And we are writing these things so that your joy may be complete.

So you see the word here-fellowship. You will have fellowship with the Father, a relationship with the Father. Koinonia with the Father and the Son. And that is so that your joy may be full. The way to have fullness of joy in the Christian life is not to say, Oh, one day I'll go to heaven, but right here I'm alone, struggling in this world. The writer wants you to have joy. It's wonderful to be a Christian because I have this amazing fellowship with God.

verse 5: This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

You will find in this letter, "This is the message". And what's the message? God is light. Later on in chapter three, verse 11, you will hear the same thing. This is the message-that God is Love. So John is teaching us that there are two main messages in this sermon:

Number 1 - God is Light.

Number 2 - God is Love.

God is Light - what is the meaning? We all agree that the world is dark. Dark usually speaks of evil things. Evil things are done in the dark. We lie, we commit adultery.

But God is light. Does everything in the open. When we do things openly it means we do things that are good which we're proud of. So God is light. Basically, he's dividing a world of darkness, where things are done in shame, and a world of light where things are done openly.

verses 6: If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practise the truth.

verse 7: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

If we say we have fellowship with Christ, but we are doing sinful things we are ashamed of, then we are lying. We don't have fellowship with Christ. That's why most Christians don't have much of a partnership and therefore no joy. But if we walk in the light as He's in the light, then we have fellowship with Him. But whenever we sin, the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us of all sin. Sometimes we slip up and walk into the world of darkness and do something bad. Then we have the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all our sins.

verse 8: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

verse 9: if we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So whenever we slip into the world of darkness, what must we do straightaway? Confess our sins. And He is very quick to forgive us our sins. So we walk in the light. Sometimes you drop into darkness, quickly confess our sins and come back to Him again, to have that fellowship with Him.

The gist of this whole passage is God is light. He wants us to walk in the world of light as opposed to the world of evil.

Chapter 2

verse 1: My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. verse 2: He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The reason why John wrote this book to tell us that God is light, is because he wants us to walk in the world of light, and not sin. That's the goal. But if we sin, we have an advocate. What's an advocate? A defence lawyer, who's up there.

When we sin, our advocate can stand before the Father and say, I have already paid for their sins. Look at verse 2 - He is the propitiation for our sins. He has already paid for our sins, settled our sins.

verse 3: And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

Keep all the commandments? Not easy, right? How many are there? So we know God if we keep His commandments, but really, what are his commandments? I mean, do you count them one by one?

verse 6: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

How do we keep His commandments? Try to walk the way Christ walked. Every time you want to do something, ask yourself, if Christ were here, what would he do?

You read the Gospels - when He saw a person hungry, what do you think he would do? He would think of ways how he could help him. If a person is lost, how He could lead him to the light. If He saw a person discouraged, he would probably put his hand on him and encourage him.

So what are his commandments? Do you think of them one by one or just seeing the way how He walked.

verse 7: Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

What is the new and the old commandment? In the Gospel of John chapter 13:34, Jesus on the last night he was with his disciples, He said, A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you....

So that's a new commandment. But John goes to say, I'm writing no new commandment to you. But Jesus said it was a new commandment. You must not forget this is like, maybe 60 years later that John wrote this!

So it's no more a new commandment. When Jesus was telling his disciples in the Last Supper in the upper room, I will tell you a new commandment! Don't think of all the 613 commandments that the Old Testament is teaching about! This is the new commandment - Love each other, the way I loved you.

So every time when we are thinking, what is the commandment God wants me to do under these circumstances? Just think what do you think Jesus would do under these circumstances? And then you will probably be obeying the commandment - Love your neighbor, love as Christ loved us.

verse 9: Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

If you hate your brother, you are living in darkness. But verse 10 says, You love your brother, you abide in the light.

I hope you understand that this light... what is light? It is to live in a world that is different from the world that we have lived in before, where we don't love our brother and we love ourselves. The only one we love is ourselves in the old dark world that is around us.

verse 12: I'm writing to you, little children because your sins are forgiven for His name's sake,

verse 13: I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I'm writing to you young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you children, because you know the Father,

verse 14: I write to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.

This is classical, circular kind of writing, just repeating but emphasizing later the second time, saying the same thing in a slightly different way.

Basically, John is telling us that he's writing to three categories of people. The first category is the little children, the new converts. All they know about Christ is that their sins are forgiven.

Then there's a second category of people he calls young men. These are strong men, that are growing in the Lord. They know His word, they've overcome the evil one, and a lot of temptations they've been able to stand up to. So they're growing and they are stronger, and stand up to the evil one.

Then he calls the rest – fathers, the older men, the matured people. He says, You have known Christ from the beginning. You've experienced Christ right throughout.

Basically, he just saying that there are three categories of people in the church. Very simple - notice the 'forgiveness'. The second category is 'growing'. The third has really experienced God 'from the beginning'. That's all it is. It sounds confusing, but actually, it's not such a complicated thing.

verse 15: Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

verse 16: For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life - is not from the Father but is from the world.

What is the world? The old world is the love of your desires. Grab more things, more prestige, more everything. That's exactly how we lived. I'm not teaching anything new or strange, the whole world is like that. But he said don't live that way. Do not love the world, because that is not from the Father. That's is not God's way. It is a different kind -Don't love yourself and love things. Love others. So that is the new world we have been brought into by the light. We see this new world that actually we have never seen before. God is light. He shines on this new world for us. It's not about things you can get, but people we can love. Very opposite, not grabbing but giving, not thinking I'd be happier and have more, but realizing I'd be happier when I love others more.

verse 18: Children, it is the last hour, and you have heard the antichrist is coming, so now many anti-christ have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

verse 19: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

So who's antichrist? Not THE Antichrist, but an antichrist. An antichrist is one who denies Jesus is Christ. Oh, he's just a god, pretending to be man. He's just a man, but he's not THE Christ. In other words, they deny the amazing Christ who is 100% God, 100% man. Anyone who denies this is an antichrist. So there were people who left the church because they couldn't accept this.

verse 22: Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

verse 23: No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

If we deny the Son, we deny the Father. They're one. Again, very hard to understand except by faith. That's why we have the Holy Spirit who gives us this faith, to understand and to believe these things. Now if you don't have this faith from God, how can you understand this?

Let's go on to chapter 3.

verse 1: See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

verse 2: Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.

verse 3: And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

We know that one day we will see God. But we know that when we see him that day we will not be like the old guy. We are going to be some newer creation of this old guy. But what is that? I really don't know. Improved version PC? But if you have this hope in you that this person, flesh and all is going to be improved, we will take care of this person; we will not abuse this person. We will purify ourselves.

The Greek separated the body from the spirit. I can do anything to my body- just mess it up and indulge in any kind of sins, sexual, greed, gluttony, anything, because it will be left in the dust.

No, I will be up there! When I see God I'm going to be an improved version so I better take care of this old version. So the new version will be in good shape. That's basically what it says here.

verse 6: No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning is either seen him or known him.

If you abide in Christ, then you will not keep on sinning. What in the world does all this mean?

Verse 8: Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

verse 9: No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning because he's born of God.

So if a person has this character of just sinning freely, no guilt, does it as a routine, then you know his character. Where did he get it from? He got it from the original one, the devil. The devil sins all day. That's his happiness! When he cheats, and he gets away with it, he's happy. When he steals and he gets away with it, he's happy, he commits adultery and he gets away with it, he's happy. He's proud of it.

That's his life! A businessman who exploits all his workers and boast, See how much I made? See how many women I have seduced....where did he get that from? From the one who sinned from the beginning - Satan. But you cannot be like that because you are born of God.

The second part of verse 8... the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him. He cannot keep on sinning, because he's been born of God

Christ came to die for our sins, then rose from the dead and then sent the Holy Spirit into us. Know ye not that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit- 1Corinthians 3:16; Galatians 2:20-Christ lives in you, John 3:3- Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Christ came not only to remove our sins, but also to give us a new birth. Born again. In our birth, we have a new DNA. It is called a seed. When I was born of my biological father, I got his DNA. When I'm born of Christ... born again, I got His DNA. And with that new DNA in me - I want to love others.

So, if you have this new seed in you, then you cannot go on sinning freely because you have a new character. So you know who is born of God, because he doesn't keep on sinning. He has an old nature that keeps falling into sin, but he has a new nature that wants to have a Christlike

life. If you keep on sinning you don't have the seed obviously, you don't have the new DNA.

Verse 10: By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

So the proof is very simple - by their life. How do you know a man is saved? Look at his life. If he has this character of wanting to love his brother, pray for his brother, help his brother, help those who are lost with the gospel, help those who are hungry with food, I believe he is of God. That's the proof!

That's what James was saying. Faith without works is dead. There's no such thing as faith without works! Faith in Christ results in a born-again person with a born-again character, which has new works.

So we go on to Chapter 3:11 - it's a whole new section. How do I know? It begins this way - For this is the message that you've heard from the beginning. Remember, we have also seen in Chapter 1:5 - This is the message....God is Light. Then now, Chapter 3:11 - This is the message....God is love. These are two main themes.

3:11 For this is message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Verse 12: We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous.

Verse 13: Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

So he uses Cain's example. The poor Christians in these Ephesian churches were being persecuted by others. And they were troubled, and John says, why are you troubled? Cain, the first persecutor, persecuted Abel, killed his own brother. Why? Because Cain's deeds were evil and Abel's were good. So your people are persecuting you because your deeds are good, and theirs are evil. Nobody likes to be shown up. So he's telling them, persecution has been from the Garden of Eden.

Chapter 3:6 No one who abides in Him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has ever seen him or known him.

If you abide in Christ....you mean.. as Christians, I cannot sin? I cannot sin only when I abide in Christ, only when I remember 'I'm a child of God'. I have this new capacity to do right, but often, I don't abide in him. I just watch the world around me. Though I have the capacity to overcome those sins, but I'm not aware I am a child of God, I'm not supposed to do it, and I have the power to overcome them. When I forget that, then I fall into sin.

It doesn't mean that once you have the seed, you don't sin. Not true. There's still a competing nature. We still have the old nature that slips into sin; the new nature has to be activated, as we realize we have this power not to live that way.

Chapter 3:16 By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

verse 17: But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

verse 18: Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth.

So he's telling us, that we need to love as Christ loves us. How did Christ love us? He saw a need, He laid his life down for us. We ought to make sacrifices for our brothers. You see they have a need, we meet those needs. Agape love is a giving love. In agape love, it's attention to people's needs, meeting their needs as Christ met our need.

We move on to Chapter 4:

verse 1: Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

verse 2: By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

So here we are again, repeating. How do you know this person is an antichrist? How do you know this person is a false prophet? He denies that Jesus is hundred percent man-come in the flesh.

verse 7: Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

verse 8: Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

He keeps saying, God is love, as if it is the most normal thing in the world. Let me tell you, no other religion ever says God is love. They cannot. Now if God is a Unitarian God, not a trinity, how can he be love? Who does he love? Himself? He's only one. The only God that can love is a Trinitarian God because love... when we talk love, it is agape love, is love for others. And so when we say God is love, it's unique to other religions.

God is merciful, maybe. God is holy, all separated, maybe. But God is love, impossible in a unitarian God. So when we see in 1 John, he says God is love, it's a profound thought. It's a Trinitarian God we are worshipping That's why Christ is God. The people in the Ephesian churches couldn't accept it. If one is God, the other one cannot be God. If Jesus is really man, he is not God.

But the only reason why God is love is He is a trinity. God is a Trinity.

verse 9: In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

verse 10: In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

verse 11: Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

So this is repeating, repeating... this is John's style. If you have experienced agape love from God, it is giving love, giving his only begotten Son and his only begotten Son giving his entire life to us; then we ought to do the same.

verse 16: So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

verse 17: By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgement, because as he is so also are we in the world.

verse 18: There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

What does this three verses mean? It tells us if we live a life of love, then we know we are really God's child.

If you are a born-again Christian, and you know you should show agape love, but you have never practiced it-you're too busy in the world, and when devil comes in saying, "Are you sure you're a child of God? I don't see any evidence of that." Then you begin to wonder, and have fear. But he says perfect love casts out fear.

That means if you have this love, and you are living like Christ, then when the devil comes to you and says, Are you really a child of God? You say, "Of course I am, why do you think I'm doing all these things? How come I'm so different from the world, how come I care for the poor? How come I reach out? How come I'm not a selfish grabber?" Then I have confidence.

I don't have fear. I know I am a child of God. This is what John is trying to teach us. If you live the kind of life that has evidence of being a child of God, you will live a life of confidence that you're a child of God. And when you pray, you know God will hear you.

Chapter 5 - How can you have joy in your Christian life?

verse 3: For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

verse 4: For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is a victory that has overcome the world - our faith.

How does our faith overcome the world... do we conquer the world? Everyone who is born of God has a way of living which is not like the world. We live above the world. The world grabs. I don't need to grab; I give. The world's things are going to be happy. I know they wouldn't be happy. I've overcome those foolish things of the world. Not by conquering like a warrior, but by agape love. That world... foolish world. I was there before! Miserable world! I have my simple faith. I give, I have joy. That's how I overcome the world by faith.

verse 6: This is He who came by water and blood - Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

We see here something very hard to understand. Verse 8 the spirit and the water and the blood, these three agree, What is all this?

The people who had left the church had a new theory. They said that, Actually, Jesus was born a man. A real man. But in his baptism, the Holy Spirit came in and he became kind of like godlike! So actually, he's a man with the life of God put into him at baptism, and then, when he went on the cross, about to go on the cross, the Holy Spirit left him.

And then he went to the cross as a man. So in other words, he was really a man, with a brief period from his baptism to the time he was crucified, he had this God-thing in him. And then the God-thing left him and he went to the cross as a man.

That's what they were basically teaching! They could not accept that Jesus is 100% God, 100% man! Up to now, Jesus is still 100% God, 100% man!

He chose to unite God and man in His body. But they couldn't accept that. And so John is saying, These are the three things - water is baptism, when God said this is my beloved Son, his blood when He shed His blood, died a horrible death. God again vindicated him by raising him from the dead. That's the proof that He is God. Water, blood and Spirit testified that He is the Christ. Hundred percent God. Hundred percent man. I hope you get this very difficult concept.

verse 14: And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us.

verse 15: And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

When you do God's will, you have confidence when you ask whatever. God's will is to love others. When you ask for things to help others, you're confident God will hear you pray. You ask things to make you beautiful, handsome and more popular, don't be too sure God will answer your prayer.

verse 16: If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life-to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that.

verse 17: All wrongdoing is sin, but there is a sin that does not lead to death.

verse 18: We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

What is the sin that leads to death? I'm not sure, but I think the answer is in verse 18.

verse 18: We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning...

So what's the sin that leads to death? The perpetual habit of sin! You see a guy keeps sinning, don't treat him as a brother. No need to pray for him to be forgiven of those sins. He's condemned. He wants to go to hell. He doesn't want Christ. He doesn't even have Christ. To me, the sin that leads to death is the habit of sin. Others have different interpretations.

If you see a brother fall into sin - it's not his habit, but he fell into sin- pray for him and try to help him. But if a guy just keeps on sinning, don't pray for his sins to be forgiven, just share the gospel with him.

And lastly, he ends his letter in a most strange way. It has no greeting in the beginning, and no goodbye at the end.

verse 21: Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

What is an idol? An idol is a false god.

Little children, remember Jesus Christ, he's the only real God. Everything else is not the real God. Jesus alone. Trust in Him alone. Trust in any other idol, any other Jesus who is not 100% God, 100% man - that is not Jesus. That's an idol. That's useless.

So for you and I as mature Christians think about this carefully. What kind of God do we have? A God who chose to come down to earth, the Son of God, eternally in the heavens, infinite God chose to be limited as a man, so He could die for our sins, live among us, die for our sins, rise from the dead and today, He is still God-man for from that time on from His incarnation He chose to be God-man, forever.

What kind of love is this, that Jesus the Son of God, chose to be God-man, so that He can live among us forever and ever. Is that agape love? Not just going to the cross, but being God-man, forever and ever in the new heaven and the new earth, with you and me.

I hope today as you read 1st John, it's not just about your relationship with God, but His wanting to have this relationship with us so that God became man that he could be with man.

May God bless you with this thought.