



The Epistles of Love The Expository Study of The Epistles of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, John

Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor

At the close of his life, the Apostle John penned three letters, perhaps as his final sermons, to the believers gathered in the house-churches in Ephesus, which is now modern Turkey. John had given his life in the proclamation of the gospel, and he was burdened to see the efficacy of that gospel threatened by false teachers. In 1 John 2:26, the aging Apostle wrote: ***“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you!”***

Likewise, many churches today are being seduced by the false teachers of:

- **Prosperity Gospel** – that faith and positive confessions lead to wealth, health, and success.
- **Hyper-Grace** – that there is no need for repentance because God forgives our sin because of His grace.
- **Syncretism and New Age influences** – that all religions worship the same God.
- **Universalism** – that a loving God will ultimately save everyone.
- **Progressive Christianity:** Reinterpreting the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith to conform to contemporary cultural norms.

- **Distortion of authority:** Excluding the parts of the Bible that differ with cultural norms.

An Overview of the Epistles of John:

- **The Author** – John, the same one who wrote the Gospel of John concerning the Lord’s first coming, and the Book of Revelation, outlining the events of the Lord’s second coming.
- **The date of this writing** is around 85-90 AD.
- **John and James were known as the “Sons of Thunder”** – they were rugged fishermen who worked with their father on the Sea of Galilee until Jesus called them to become His disciples.
 - Jesus taught the 12 disciples, and He poured His life in to Peter, James, and John, but Jesus turned to John for love and support. Since Salome was one of Mary’s sisters, John and James were Jesus’ 1st
 - According to Galatians 2:9, after Peter died, John became the major pillar of the Church in Jerusalem.
 - He was banished to the isle of Patmos, where he received the revelation of the final events of human history and the return of Jesus to establish His Kingdom upon this earth for all eternity.
 - After two years on Patmos, and at the age of 95, John returned to Ephesus to live out the rest of his life; the only disciple of the original 12 to die a peaceful death.
 - During those final years, John wrote his account of the life of Christ on parchment, establishing his gospel, and these three epistles to the churches, urging them to defend that gospel from theological error.
- **The greatest error in that day was “Gnosticism,”** – which blended Christianity with the Greek concept of the universe and the practice of all oriental religions to achieve a “higher knowledge” of life.
- **1st John – a “general epistle” to all the churches,** encouraging the churches to keep their focus on the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith and to love one another.
 - God is light and love; therefore, believers are called to hold fast to the light of truth and to love one another. Christians can have the blessed assurance of the eternal salvation if they will remain true to what John had written in the scriptures.
- **2nd John – a specific epistle to a specific “house church”** about the dangers of false teachers who denied the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - John instructed the believers not to offer support or hospitality to those who denied the truth about Jesus.
- **3rd John – a personal letter to a man named Gaius,** commending him for his hospitality to missionaries, and reprimanding Diotrephes for his poor leadership in the church. John also warned his readers about how easy it was for a convert to fall back into carnality if they did not maintain their fellowship with God.

In 1 John 1, the Apostle gave the reason for these three epistles:

Positively:

- 1 John 1:4 – ***“that your joy may be made complete!”***
- 1 John 2:1 – ***“that you may not sin!”***
- 1 John 5:13 – ***“that you may know you have eternal life!”***

Negatively:

- John said he wrote this letter to address the false doctrines that threatened the very efficacy of the gospel message.
- 1 John 2:26 – ***“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you!”***

Multiple thousands of people are being seduced today by pandering preachers who peddle their false gospel just to draw large crowds.

- The “Gnosticism” of the 1st century is similar to the cheap concepts of the Christian faith being promoted through many Contemporary Churches today, including:
 - **A lack of doctrinal clarity** – one can believe what they want to believe about God, about Jesus, about the Holy Spirit, about sin, and the need for a Savior – all God requires is sincerity of faith.
 - **Progressive and non-denominational churches** are merging the various styles of worship with Yoga and meditation. These groups may also incorporate chanting and walking meditation.
 - **Many churches combine traditional hymns and liturgy with contemporary music and multimedia presentations** to appeal to a multi-generational congregation. Their goal is to ensure that the older and younger members feel comfortable and engaged.
 - **Many churches emphasize inclusivity and social justice as the hallmarks of the Christian Faith** – relationships are more important than absolutes, and acceptance and tolerance are more important than proclaiming the gospel or calling people to repent of their sins.
- In John’s Day the heresy of “Gnosticism” resulted in two different attitudes toward the human body:
 - **The body is not totally evil** – it just needs to be disciplined and its’ urges controlled or mastered through knowledge.
 - **The body is totally evil and doomed to death**, so it doesn’t matter what a person does with their physical body.
 - If a person took care of their “spirit” by participating in a religious activity, they could do whatever they wanted to with their bodies, because it would return to dust.
- Since these “Gnostics” considered the physical body as being evil, they denied that Jesus Christ had a physical body, for how could the “holy” inhabit the “unholy?”

Millions of people believe they are saved because they have been baptized in water, are official members of local church, and occasionally attend some form of worship, and yet, live as they want to and do what they want with their bodies!

- But the human body was created in the image of God and for God’s purposes – not man’s. Therefore, how a person uses or dresses their body reflects their relationship and fellowship with God.

- It is impossible to be in right spirit with God and yet dishonor Him with our bodies in any shape, form, or fashion.
- A true, born-again believer will honor God with his spirit and his body, just as Jesus honored God with His body.
- Galatians 2:20 – ***“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”***

According to the Barna Group, 2/3^{ds} of those who claim to be born again have experienced doubts about their eternal salvation, and ¼ of them live with those doubts each day.

- Some doubts arise because of unanswered intellectual questions.
- Some doubts arise because of unexplained emotional issues.
- Some doubts arise because the believer sees no evidence of a changed life in others.

The assurance of our salvation is the confidence that we have received God’s acceptance by His grace alone, through our faith alone and in Christ alone.

- The assurance of our salvation is not based upon our feelings, our ability to maintain a disciplined life, or our ability to live above the normal temptations of life.
- The assurance of our salvation is based upon the truth of God’s Word regarding the work of Jesus Christ.
- 1st John 5:11-13 – ***“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”***
- The only sure evidence of our eternal salvation is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in us, to us, with us, and through us:
- Through the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit in our ministry to and through the Body of Christ – the Church.
- Through the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives to those who are lost and our brothers and sisters in Christ.