A Patristic Commentary



The Book of John 1

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Chapter One

THE INCARNATE LOGOS

St. John addresses these topics:

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1. INCARNATION OF GOD THE WORD, THE LIFE-GIVER

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life." (v. 1)

St. John started his Epistle with this strong testimony, for he was the closest to our Lord. He was the only one to lean on the Lord's bosom (John 13:23) to drink from His deep mysteries. He, with James and John, saw the glories of the Son on the Mount of Tabor. (Matt. 17:1) He accompanied the Lord Jesus to the cross and the Lord delivered to him the care of His mother St. Mary. (John 19:25-27) He saw and touched with the disciples the scars of the wounds of the Risen Lord. (Lk. 24:39)

Probably, St. John, at that time, was the only apostle who saw a witness to the Lord and was still living. He said, "That which was from the beginning," that is, the eternal and invisible took flesh and became Man. "Which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled," that is, the Son who became Man and we have heard Him, seen Him, and touched Him, then our hearts have realized Him as "***the Word of life***."

He came so that we may see Him and our spirits may touch Him and live by Him for He is the Living God, the source of life. (1 John 1:1, 3)

St. Augustine says: [Who can touch God the Word? Only if the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The word incarnate took the beginning of His humanity from St. Mary, but this is not the beginning of the Word, for St. John says, "That which was from the beginning," that is He is a partaker of the Father in eternity[1].

The Word became incarnate to declare to the human race His great love for them. He does not want to be far from them but to be close to each one of them. They can hear His voice inside them and see Him with their hearts and touch Him in their inner lives, thus they enjoy the word of life. St. Paul said, "Do not say in your heart, Who will ascend into heaven? (That is to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is the word of faith which we preach.)" (Rom. 10:6-8)]

Tertullian commented on this statement by saying, "that no one can see God and live" (Exod. 33:20; John 1:18). God the Father is invisible and the Son is invisible too, but He took flesh and became visible. The Son, "who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16) took flesh and died for us (1 Cor. 15:3) and became visible (1 Cor. 15:8). When the apostle saw Him, he was unable to see for the glory of that light (Acts 22:11), also

[1] Ten Homilies on 1st Epistle of St. John.

Peter, James and John were unable to look at His shining face during the transfiguration. (Matt. 17:6; Mark 9:6) [2].

The Son, the Word Incarnate, came so that we may hear Him with John and the rest of the apostles calling the sinners and publicans by their names, having compassion on them without rebuking them.

You hear Him with pure ears forgiving your sins, reconciling you with His Father, paying the price of reconciliation, with His precious blood.

You see Him searching for you as a good Shepherd and true Father. He goes by His own will to the cross and opens His side as a refuge for you, where you see His heart inflamed with love for you.

You see Him rise from the dead, ascending to the heavens, so your heart may rise with Him and settle with Him where He is sitting.

You touch Him with His mother, the Virgin St. Mary, so you may long for Him, presenting yourself as a chaste virgin for Him, touching Him with Thomas confessing His divinity.

You touch His feet and wash them with your tears like the adulterous woman, so He may bless you. He does not reject the touches of your hands nor belittles your tears but is very cautious to keep them as precious jewels for Him.

For my sake and your sake, the Lord came Incarnate so we may enjoy the life, which He has manifested for us. ***"The life was manifested*" (v. 2)**

❖ Christ appeared as the Word of life dawned in the flesh which appeared to mankind. In the beginning, He appeared to angels and not to men, so they saw and were fed by Him as bread for them. Now He became as bread for us, for the Bible says, "Man ate the bread of the angels." (Ps. 78:25)[3].

St. Augustine

❖ Christ came to manifest Himself as life for the soul, saving man from his spiritual death, not with the intention of revealing the mysteries of the soul[4].

Tertullian

This is the purpose of the incarnation, and this is what the disciples saw and witnessed.

❖ When he says, "That which was from the beginning," he touches upon the generation without the beginning of the Son, who is co-existent with the Father. There was; then, a Word signifying an non-existing eternity; as also the Word itself, that is, the Son of God, who being, by equality of substance, one with the Father, is eternal and uncreated. That He was always the Word, is signified by saying, "In the beginning was the Word." But by the expression, "we have seen with our eyes," he signifies the Lord's presence in the flesh, "and our hands have handled," he says, *"of the Word of life."* He means not only His flesh, but the virtues of the Son. like the sunbeam which penetrates to the lowest places, this sunbeam coming in the flesh became material to the disciples. It is accordingly related in traditions, that John, touching the outward body itself, sent his hand deep down into it, and that the strength of the flesh offered no obstacle, but gave way to the hand of the disciple. **"And our hands have handled the Word of life**;" that is, He who came in the flesh became capable of being touched.

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[2] Against Praxeas 15.
[3] Ten Homilies on 1st Epistle of St. John.
[4] On the Flesh of Christ.

St. Clement of Alexandria

❖ Many think that these words apply to the post resurrection appearances of Jesus and say that John is speaking of himself and the other disciples who first of all heard that the Lord had risen and afterwards saw Him with their own eyes, to the point where they touched His feet, His hands and His side and felt the imprint of the nails. For even if Thomas was the only one who actually made physical contact with Him, he was an example of the others, for the Savior told them all to touch Him and see for themselves(Lk24: 39)..

But others take these words in a deeper sense, noticing that they do not only speak about touching but also about handling the "word of life which was from the beginning." Who can this refer to, other than to the one who said: "I am that I am"?

Another interpretation is that we have now seen openly with our own eyes the One who was in the beginning, of whom the Law and the prophets spoke, saying that He would come.

St. Didymus The Blind

"And we have seen and bear ed witness." (v. 2)

❖ The word "witness" means that we became martyrs, as if saying, "We saw and became martyrs," for the martyrs endured many sufferings because of their true witness for what they have seen and heard. This witness enraged those who were against them, so the witnesses became martyrs. This is the good will of God that people may be a witness to Him, so He also may be a witness to them[5].

St. Augustine

Let us see the Lord in our lives and witness to Him by responding to His work, carrying His traits in our lives, being slain for His sake everyday.

❖ Note that there is an important difference between seeing and contemplating. For what is seen can be told to others, which is not always possible with things which are contemplated. For there are many things which may be perfectly well contemplated but which cannot be expressed in words because they are known by some unutterable understanding. In this verse it should be noticed that those who do bear witness are not validating the life of Jesus (for He is not in need of it) but improving themselves by their confession.

St. Didymus The Blind

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

A. That we have fellowship, joy and enjoyment of the eternal life:

"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." (v. 2)

The message of the Lord Jesus is to offer Himself to humanity to accept Him as the Head not separated from them, but to become part of His flesh and bones (Eph. 5:30), and living members in His mysterious body.

Sin has mortified the human soul for it hid her from God the source of her life. The Son, the Word Incarnate, came to grant us life. He descended to us and died and rose and ascended by the power of His authority, carrying us on His shoulders as living sacrifices, which the Conqueror has won. He entered with great glory, not by himself but with the recovery to be with Him and enjoy Him in the heavens.

God, the incomprehensible, descended to us because of His goodness and has put on the members of the flesh and emptied all the glory. He became flesh and was united with it to take with Him all the holy, faithful, and accepted souls with Him and become with them one spirit as

[5] Ten Homilies on 1st Epistle of St. John.

St. Paul the apostle said (1 Cor. 6:17), so that the soul may live in complete harmony and may taste the eternal life and become a partaker of the undefiled glory.

St. Makarios the Great

Now, we who were considered not worthy to stay on earth (Gen. 6:7), were raised up to heaven. We, who were previously not worthy of the earthly glory, ascend to the kingdom of heaven and enter the heavens and take our place before the divine throne.

St. John Chrysostom

This is what the disciples have heard and they tell it to us, so why don't we enjoy all these matters like them? That is why St. John added:

The life itself has been manifested in flesh, so that what can be seen by the heart alone might be seen also by the eyes, in order that our hearts might be healed.

St. Augustine

"**The life was manifested**," for in the Gospel so he speaks: "And what was made, in Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

St. Clement of Alexandria

"That you also may have fellowship with us" (v. 3)

Hence, we are partakers of the faith and in the eternal life. When Thomas touched Him, he said, "My Lord and my God," then the entire human race touched Him too. If we have not touched Him by human hands, yet we have heard the blessing from the divine mouth saying, "Because you have seen Me, you believe. Blessed are those who believe and yet have not seen."

The Lord Jesus has risen and we are sure of His resurrection and we have the resurrection in Him, thus we have participated with the disciples in their faith and enjoyed with them the resurrection with Him and life with Him.

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (v. 3, 4)

The disciples, as eyewitnesses, have touched with their outer senses and have realized by their inner senses, and have delivered this testimony to the next generations. So every generation delivers, with joy, to the next generation the faith delivered once to the saints.

Since we have this apostolic faith, the one faith across all generations for the one church, we can, through the church, enjoy the fellowship with the Father and the Son, the Bridegroom of the church, thus we achieve the perfect joy, for the sake of the fellowship, the love and the true unity enjoying the deposit of the eternal life.

It is amazing that St. John has mentioned our fellowship with the Father and the Son after mentioning "that you also may have fellowship with us." We have no fellowship except with them, that is, with all the apostles in the church, as living members in the mysterious body of Christ and being attached by the one faith of the Orthodox Church.

B. To follow God the Light:

The purpose of the incarnation is to know our Lord and Savior and to accept fellowship with Him, performing all the wealth, which is the light. Our part is in the darkness and weakness, and by our unity with the light, our darkness is abolished so we may abide in the light.

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you." (v. 5)

The fullness of joy comes when we are in fellowship with the apostles, as well as of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Hilary of Arles

"That God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." (v. 5)

This is what we should declare. Who dares and says that God has darkness? What is light? What is darkness? St. John probably meant their general meaning. “God is light.” Some say that the sun is light and that the moon is light and that the candle is light. The light, which is meant here, should be greater and more superior than all these lights. How far is God from His creation?We can come close to that light if we know Him and submit our souls to be enlightened by Him. We are full of darkness, by ourselves, and cannot be light unless He alone enlightens us!

Since we stumble by ourselves, we should not stumble by Him. Who is the one who stumbles by Him except the one who does not realize that he is a sinner?

What does enlightenment by Him mean except that one realizes that his soul is darkened by sin and one desires to be enlightened by the light so he comes closer to Him. David the Psalmist said, “They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.” (Ps. 34:5) You will not be ashamed from the light when He reveals to you yourself that you are evil, so you will be sorry for your sins and then you will realize the beauty of the light.

St. Augustine

Truly, God is the light, which enlightens the minds of those who accept the truth, as written in Psalm 36: “In your light we see light.” God who enlightens man and makes him see the truth in everything and brings him to the knowledge of God Himself who is called “the truth.” By saying, “In your light we see light,” he means that by your word and wisdom that is through Your Son we see the Father in Him.

Origen

“**For God**,” he says, “**He is Light**.” He does not express the divine essence, but wishing to declare the majesty of God, he has applied to the Divinity what is best and elite in the view of man. Thus also Patti, when he speaks of “light inaccessible.” But John himself also in this same Epistle says, “God is love:” pointing out the excellences of God, that He is kind and merciful; and because He is light, which makes men righteous, according to the advance of the soul, through charity. God, then, who is indefinablen respect of His substance, is light.

“**And in Him is no darkness at all**,” which is, not a passion, [He] destroys no one but gives salvation to all. Light moreover signifies, either the precepts of the Law, faith, or doctrine. Darkness is the opposite of these things. Not as if there were another way; since there is only one way according to the divine precepts. For the work of God is unity. Duality and all else that exists, except unity which arises from perversity of life.

St. Clement of Alexandria

When John says that there is no darkness in the light of God, he proves that all the light of the others are stained by some blemish. **St. Jerome**

God is the light of purified minds, not of these bodily eyes. For then (in heaven) the mind will be able to see this light, which right now it is not yet able to do.

St. Augustine

The truth is light, so if we do not walk according to it, we are in the darkness. The blood of animal sacrifices was enough to cleanse people from whatever detailed sin they had committed, but the blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse those who walk in love from all sin.

Hilary of Arles.

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him,
and walk in darkness,
we lie and do not practice the truth.” (v. 6)

The true light came to enlighten every man. “This is the condemnation that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19) Whoever refuses to abide in the light has no fellowship with God but becomes a deceiver, not abiding in the truth.

Anyone who walks in the darkness of sin but claims that his mind is not darkened and that he has a relationship with God is lying. **St. Didymus The Blind**

“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.” (v. 7)

This is the sign of having fellowship with the light: to abide in the light. And this is the sign of abiding in the light that we have fellowship with one another, that is, the love and unity based on our attachment by the one orthodox faith as members in the one body, and to continuously enjoy being cleansed from every sin through repentance and confession, and that is through the blood of Christ.

St. John put our fellowship with each other, which is, our one faith full of love as one church, before saying, “And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,” for one cannot enjoy being purified by the blood of Christ outside this one church.

“**And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son**,” he says, “**cleanses us**.” For the doctrine of the Lord, which is very powerful, is called His blood.

St. Clement of Alexandria

C. To confess our sins

“If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
If we say that we have not sinned,
we make him a liar,
and His word is not in us.” (v. 8, 9, 10)

The one who thinks that he has no sin does not receive forgiveness.

St. Augustine

One may say: what do I do, how can I be light while I live in sin and evil? One may live in despair for there is no salvation without having fellowship with God, and He is the light with no darkness at all, but sin is darkness, so how can I be cleansed from it? St. John continues, “And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” How great is that pledge! Being in this world among temptations, we stumble and commit sin, even after our sins are forgiven in baptism; however, we have to confess our sins, so Christ may heal us with His blood.

One may ask: Do we need to confess before a father of confession?

We ask with **St. Augustine**: why do you escape from confession? Is it because of shyness or pride?

Can the Lord just utter some linguistic words when He gave the disciples the authority to forgive and retain sins? (John 20:23 ; Matt. 18:18)

The book of Acts tells us that, “And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.” (Acts 19:18)

St. Augustine said, “that the Lord is the One who raised Lazarus from the dead, but the disciples loosed his grave’d-clothes.” Couldn’t the One who granted life loose the grave’s-clothes?

The Lord met directly with Saul, but He told him to go to Ananius.

Since the first century, the church lived according to the confession to a priest. The fathers say:**Pope Athanasius the Apostolic** says, “As the baptized person is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, likewise, through the priest, the penitent receives forgiveness of sins by the grace of Christ.”

St. Cyprian says, “The authority of forgiving sins was granted to the apostles and to the churches which they established for they were sent by God, and to the bishops their successors.”

St. Gregory of Nyssa says, “Pour before me a fountain of many tears and I will do with you the same act. Consider the minister of the church, a spiritual father, and reveal to him all the secrets of your souls as the sick peplus reveal his hidden wounds before the doctor, so you may be healed.”

He who thinks that he does not need repentance nor confession, that is, he considers himself righteous,

Deceives himself (v. 8) :

For he ignores the truth of his weakness and that he is susceptible to fall in sin any time.

The truth is not in him (v. 8) :

For the truth is light to reveal to man his reality.

We make Him a liar (v. 10):

That is he who accuses God Himself who emphasizes that there is no goodness in man, and no matter how high he attains in the life of holiness, he may fall if he is proud or becomes careless in struggle.

His word is not in us: (v. 10):

For this is the word of God and his commandment to ask every day, “Forgive us our sins.”

Chapter Two
THE INCARNATE GOD
AND
LOVE TO THE LORD AND OUR BROTHERS

This chapter is based on the subject of **love**:

1.The love of Christ to us:v. 1, 2

2.Our love to Him by keeping His commandments, which concentrates on brotherly lovev. 3-11.

3.Our love to God:

- **Our capabilities as loving childrenv. 12-14**
- **Rejecting the love of the worldv.15-17**
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4.Those who love God and their adoption to Him:
They wait for His Second Comingv.28
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1. THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO US

"My little children, these things I write to you,
that you may not sin.
And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous.
And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins,
and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (v. 1, 2)

St. John begins by saying, "My little children." He talks as a loving father and reveals to his children the incentive of writing this epistle so that they may not sin, that is, to live a holy life, appropriate being a child, and to abided in the light.

In other words, we should not commit sin but abide in the light persevering in every good deed.

But who cannot stumble in this world? Therefore, he adds, "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father" This Advocate is like a lawyer who defends us to make us innocent in the case. Who is that Advocate?

A. **Paraclete** or **Advocate**:

Let us consider whether the title "advocate"or "paraclete" means one thing when applied to the Savior and means another when applied to the Holy Spirit. In regard to the Savior, "paraclete" seems to mean intercessor, but in Greek it bears both meanings, comforter and intercessor, but according to the phrase which follows, in which it is said that he is the propitiation for our sins, it seems that it must mean intercessor, because he intercedes with the Father for our sins. When used of the Holy Spirit, however, the word "paraclete" ought to be understood as comforter, because he provides comfort for the souls to whom he opens and reveals a awareness of spiritual knowledge.

Origen

If you should have a case to be tried before a judge and should procure an advocate, you would be accepted by the lawyer and he would plead your case to the best of his ability. If, before he

has finished his plea, you should hear that he is to be the judge, you would rejoice, because he could be your judge, who shortly before was your lawyer.

He is the intercessor, so let us not sin. However, if you sin, be sorry and curse it. Then you can come in the presence of the Judge, trusting that He is your intercessor, and by your confession, you are not afraid to lose the case.

Often, someone lets an eloquent advocate to defend him, and here you have the Word Himself defending you, so you will not perish.

St. John, who is righteous and who drank the divine mysteries from the chest of the Lord and wrote about His divinity, did not write, "your Advocate," but we have "an Advocate." He did not say "I am your intercessor, nor "Christ is your intercessor" but "we have an Advocate." He chose to be counted with the sinners so Christ may be His Advocate.

But one may wander: Don't the saints ask for us? Don't the bishops pray for the people?

Yes, let us meditate on the Holy Scriptures to find out that even the leaders of the church ask the people to pray for them. In the same manner, St. John is asking the church, "Meanwhile praying also for us." (Col. 4:3). St. Paul is praying for the people and the people are praying for the apostles.

My brethren, we are praying for you, do you pray for us? Let each member pray for the other, and Christ the Head intercede for everyone.

St. Augustine

"**And if any man sins**," he says, "**we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ**." For so the Lord is an advocate with the Father for us. So also is there, an advocate, whom, after His assumption, He vouchsafed to send. For these primitive and first-created virtues are unchangeable as to substance, and along with subordinate angels and archangels, whose names they share, effect divine operations. Thus also Moses names the virtue of the angel Michael, by an angel near to himself and of lowest grade. The like also we find in the holy prophets; but to Moses an angel appeared near and at hand. Moses heard him and spoke to him manifestly, face to face. For the other prophets, through the agency of angels, an impression was made, as of beings, hearing, and seeing. On this account also, they alone heard, and they alone saw; as also is seen in the case of Samuel. Elisaeus also alone heard the voice by which he was called. If the voice had been open and common, it would have been heard by all. In this instance it was heard by him alone in whom the impression made by the angel worked.

St. Clement of Alexandria

B. **With the Father**: This Advocate, the Word of the Father and His Son are one in essence who never separate. Whenever we ask anything from Him, our souls are confident because He defends us in continuous intercession. "He always lives to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25)

C. **Jesus**: that is the Savior, the lover of sinners to sanctify them and justify them.

D. **Christ**: that is anointed for our salvation. This is His desire is that all are saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Whoever feels the burden of his sins and longs to be cleansed, finds an Advocate who continuously intercedes. The moment we feel that we are righteous and do not need to be cleansed, we do not benefit from the salvation which He offered us.

E. **The Righteous**: He suffered once for sinners, the Righteous for the sinners. (1 Pet. 3:18) If He were not righteous, how can He defend us? He carried our burdens and paid our debts. **St. Ephram the Syrian** says, "Glory to the Rich who paid for us what He did not borrow,

and He became a debtor by carrying our burden and broke the bonds of the one who enslaved us."

F. **Propitiation**: our Lawyer is righteous and He does not want to acquit us unjustly. He does not defend us in heaven without any justice, but He has paid the price for our debt. **St. Ephram the Syrian** says, "The heart of the Father has sent Him to us, so He has not taken our sins to the divine majesty, but through His goodness, He has offered Himself to Him a propitiation for us."

He is a just Lawyer who has paid the price, without partiality… "***not for our sins only but also for the whole world***." He is "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:20) Whoever comes to Him, He does not cast away.

We have an advocate, Jesus Christ, not indeed someone who prostrates himself before the Father on our behalf- such an idea is slavish and unworthy of the Spirit! It would not be worthy of the Father to require this, as also for the Son to submit to it, nor is it right to think such things of God. But by what He suffered as Man, He as the Word and counselor persuades the meaning of His advocacy.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus

I will not glory because I have been redeemed. I will not glory because I am free of sins but because sins we have been forgiven. I will not glory because I am profitable or because anyone is profitable to me but because Christ is an advocate on my behalf before the Father, because the blood of Christ has been poured out on my behalf.

St. Ambrose of Milan

When John says that Christ died for the sins of the "**whole world**," what he means is that he died for the whole church .

Hilary of Arles

2. OUR LOVE TO GOD BY KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS

"Now by this we know that we know Him,
if we keep His commandments.
He who says, 'I know Him',
and does not keep His commandments,
is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (v. 3, 4)

Whoever loves, loves to keep the commandment of his beloved, submit to him and wants to fulfill his wishes. "If you love Me keep My commandments." (John 14:15) However, whoever thinks that the commandment is hard or severe, it is due to the heart who is incapable to love and to know God. Knowing and experiencing God where one realizes the power of God and the effect of the Holy Spirit, makes you love to keep the commandments. One struggles and perseveres, and still feels that he is deficient, because of his wide heart and knowing the truth.

"**And by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments**." For the Gnostic he who knows also does the Works which pertains to the province of virtue. But he who performs the works is not necessarily also a Gnostic. For a man may be a doer of right works, and yet does not know of the mysteries of science. Finally, knowing that some works are performed from fear of punishment, and some on account of the promise of reward, he shows the perfection of the man gifted with knowledge, who fulfills his works by love.

St. Clement of Alexandria

Often in the Scriptures the word "know" means not just being aware of something but having personal experience of it. Jesus did not know sin, not because he never committed it himself.

For although he is like us in every other way, he never sinned. (Heb.4: 15) Given this meaning of the word "know," it is clear that anyone who says that he knows God must also keep his commandments, for the two things go together.

St. Didymus The Blind

Those who are perishing do not know God, and God will deny that he has even known them, as he Himself said: "Depart from me, for I have never known you ."

Hilary of Arles

"But whoever keeps His word,
truly the love of God is perfected in him.
By this we know that we are in Him." (v. 5)

When one keeps the commandment, he finds it as one commandment or "His word," for all the commandments are related with one thought and revolves around the Person of the Lord Jesus.

When one tastes the sweetness of the commandment, he tastes the sweetness of God's love in a perfect way. "The Love of God is perfected in him." He sees the commandments not as strictly order, not to do that, but he looks at them as love from God toward man, for He presents to us His word so we may have fellowship with Him and see Him inside us.

God hides in His commandments; whoever seeks Him finds Him in them.

Do not say that I have kept the commandments and did not find the Lord, for whoever truly seeks Him finds peace.

St. Mark the Recluse

The Lord Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21) The Lord wants us to keep His commandments to discover Him and accept Him as a Bridegroom to us. When we are His bride, we have to follow His example, for,

The person who really loves God keeps his commandments, and by so doing realizes that he knows the love of God. Our obedience results in His love .

St. Didymus The Blind

Love sustains all those who try to put God's commandments into practice .

Hilary of Arles

"But whoso keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him," by faith and love.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (v. 6)

What road did the Lord Jesus walk through? It is the road of the cross. Thus, His bride should walk in the road of the cross, the narrow road of practical love which sacrifices, the road leading to crucify the ego, all the lusts and the cares of the world, so that the heart may cleave to the Lord only. Thus, St. John talks about the subject of the Epistle, which is "love." Then he adds,

"Brethren, I write no new commandment to you,
but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning.
The old commandment is the word,
which you heard from the beginning.
Again a new commandment I write to you,
which thing is true in Him and in you." (v. 7, 8)

The commandment of love is not new, for it is old, for man knew it by nature. Thus when Cain killed Abel, right away he realized his sin. It is also new from the way which man understands it, "which thing is true in Him," for on the cross, we knew that love is not mere emotions or complimentary words, but sacrificial love for the salvation of men.

John is talking here about love. The commandment was not new, because long before that time the prophets had proclaimed it.

St. Cyril of Alexandria It is also new from its capability, for love became not hard, ***"Because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining." (v. 8)*** Through the cross, we are able to crucify the "ego," so Christ may live in us. Selfishness and the ego disappear, so the divine love may dwell in us. As St. Paul said, "You have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man..."(Col. 3:9, 10) "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." (Eph. 5:8)

"I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which you had from the beginning," - through the Law, that is, and the prophets; where it is said, God is one. Accordingly, also, he infers, "For the old commandment is the word which you have heard."

"This is the commandment; for the darkness" of perversion, that is, "has passed away, and, lo, the true light has already shone," - that is, through "faith", through knowledge, through the Covenant working in men, through prepared judgments.

St. Clement of Alexandria

The commandment is true *in him* because he loved us so much that he died for us, and it will be true *in us* also if we love one another.

Hilary of Arles

This is the essence of Christianity: ***"He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now." (v. 9)*** For we are called to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus, the true love, so how can we hate, then?

"He that says he is in the light," -in the light, he means in the truth, " and hates," he says, "his brother." By his brother, he means not only his neighbor, but also the Lord. For unbelievers hate Him and do not keep His commandments.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him." (v. 10)

Whoever wants to abide by the Lord Jesus in the light, does not stumble, not in Christ or in the church.

Who are those who stumble? They are those who are hit by Christ or by the church. Those who have been struck by Christ are like those who are burned by the sun, and those who are struck by the church are like those who are burned by the moon. It is written in the Psalms, "The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night." (Ps. 121:6) If you abide in love, you will never stumble not in Christ or in the church, and you will never forsake Christ or the church. How can one leave the church and remain in Christ, for the church is the body of Christ? The strike mentioned in the psalm means stumbling block. Those who cannot stand some issues in the church forsake the church and withdraw themselves in the name of Christ and the church. What a shame!

Look how they were described with shame, those whom the Lord Jesus taught about His body. "Most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:53) Many said that this is a hard saying and many of

His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. They were struck by the Sun and went back unable to endure the power of the word.

Those who are struck by the church and are like the moon are those who cause schism in the church by heresies.

If you would love your brothers, you would have no stumbling blocks in you!

St. Augustine

"But he who hates his brother is in darkness
and walks in darkness,
and does not know where he is going,
because the darkness has blinded his eyes." (v. 11)

Whoever forsakes the road of love stumbles with the Lord, the Stone that was cut without hands (Dan. 2:34,35), hence one does not ask for forgiveness of sins from the Lord nor accept the commandments nor believe in His promises. One also stumbles in the church, so one does not accept it and cannot tolerate worshiping in it, for darkness has blinded one's eyes.

Whoever does evil and hates his brother has extinguished the lamp of love, and therefore he walks in darkness.

Origen

If a man hates his brother, he walks in darkness and does not know where he is going. In his ignorance he goes down to hell, and in his blindness he is thrown headlong into punishment, because he withdraws from the light of Christ.

Caesarius of Arles

3. OUR LOVE TO GOD

A. Our capabilities as believers who love God:

"I write to you little children,
because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." (v. 12)

Through baptism, we are called children of God and we are granted the forgiveness of sins for His name's sake, for we were not baptized in Paul's name nor in Peter's name nor in any other name except the Holy Trinity.

St. Augustine

He then indicates the stages of advancement and progress of souls that are still located in the flesh; and calls those whose sins have been forgiven, for the. Lord's name's sake, "little children," for many believe on account of the name only. He styles "fathers" the perfect, "who have known what was from the beginning," and received with understanding, -the Son, that is, of whom he said above, "that which was from the beginning." "I write," says he, "to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one." Young man strong in despising pleasures. "The wicked one" points out the eminence of the devil. "The children," moreover, know the Father; having fled from idols and gathered together to the one God.

St. Clement of Alexandria

Love calls her children to remind them that they are all baptized and their sins are forgiven for the sake of the name of Christ.

"I write to you, fathers,
because you have known Him who is from the beginning." (v. 13)

The fathers, the priests, have the gift of fatherhood, for they know the Eternal Father who has the true fatherhood toward all humanity, however, they get their fatherhood from Him.

"I write to you young men,

because you have overcome the wicked one." (v. 13)

He wrote to the children about the fatherhood, which forgives all our sins. He wrote to the fathers about the fatherhood of the Heavenly Father, which they had from the beginning. He wrote to the youth who were granted the power of victory, for the devil fights us but he cannot overcome us, because we are strong in Christ Jesus, "For though he was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God." (2 Cor. 13:4)

St. John confirms what he had previously said,

"I write to you little children,
because you have known the Father.
I have written to you fathers
because you have known Him who is from the beginning." (v. 13, 14)

St. Paul is warning us lest we forget the One who is from the beginning, then we'll lose the spiritual fatherhood. He is assuring the youth that they have to struggle until they become victorious and are crowned. They should be filled with the hope in their strife, so he tells them:

By "father" John means those perfect people who understood everything from the very beginning and readily perceived that the Son had always existed.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"I have written to you young men
because you are strong,
and the word of God abides in you,
and you have overcome the wicked one.." (v.14)

His commandment to the children is that they have known the Father, and to the fathers that they have know Him who is from the beginning. He is commanding them to have knowledge, but not the knowledge that puffs us, but the one full of love which enlightens. (1 Cor. 8:10)

Whoever has knowledge without love is like the devils that knows the Son of God and believes in Him (Matt. 8:9), but the Lord has rebuked him. The required knowledge is the one full of the love of God, which is against the love of the world.

When our hearts are empty from the love of the world then they will be filled with the divine love. God will enter our hearts as a farmer in a field who pulls out the weeds and prunes it to prepare it to plant in it the tree of "love," but the weeds, which will be pulled out, are the love of the world.

The young men are models of courage, the elders are models of understanding, and the sons and daughters are a model of what it means to be children in Christ.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

B. Our rejection to the love of the world

"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." (v. 15)

Through baptism, we receive the new birth; therefore, we should not love the world lest the holies that are in us be converted to a curse instead of becoming for power and salvation.

How can love be established in a heart full of the love of the world? We have to pull out the weeds and plant the heavenly seeds and do not let the thorns choke the good plant.

Since the nature of friendship with God is such that if anyone loves this world he is an enemy of God, it follows that if someone wants to be a friend of God and dwell in God's love, he must turn away from love of the world and the things which are in the world .

St. Didymus The Blind

A wise father warns his children not to love things, which quickly vanish away. This wisdom is the crowning glory of the supreme Maker of all things, and it is well-suited to everyone who is righteous .

Hilary of Arles

"For the world," he says, "is in the wicked one." Is not the world, and all that is in the world, called God's creation and very good? Yes. But,

St. Clement of Alexandria

"For all that is in the world,
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.
And the world is passing away,
and the lust of it;
but he who does the will of God abides forever." (v. 16, 17)

The world drifts us away from God, but our Lord Jesus Christ is like a planted tree by the rivers of water (Ps. 1:3). He was incarnate, died and rose up to heaven, thus by His own will, He planted Himself by the rivers of water, so when the waves of this world drift us away, we hurry and hold on to Him. When the temporal matters sway us away from His love, we run back to Him and abide in Him, who took our flesh to make us eternal. Although He took what is temporal, yet he remains eternal.

This love of the world, which contains in itself the universal lust of the world, is the general kind of fornication by which one sins against one's own body, in that the human mind is unceasingly enslaved to all bodily and visible desires and pleasures, left marooned and abandoned by the very Creator of all things.

St. Augustine

The lust of the flesh is what pertains to our physical appetites, whereas the lust of the eye and the pride of life are what pertain to the vices of the soul, such as inordinate self-love, which does not come from the Father but from the devil .

Hilary of Arles

"The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the ambition of the world," which arise from the perversion of life, "are not of the Father, but of the world," and of you.

St. Clement of Alexandria

But how do we not love the things in the world?

My brothers, if a bridegroom offers his bride a ring, will she love the ring more than him? Is she going to love the ring and say that she does not want to see the face of the groom? Likewise, he who loves the creation and not her Creator; this love is considered adultery.

The devil has tempted the Lord Jesus in these three matters:

1. **The lust of the flesh**: he told Him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." (Matt. 4:3) The devil told him this after the Lord Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights and was extremely hungry.
2. **The lust of the eyes**: like desiring to perform miracles to receive a human honor. The devil told the Lord Jesus, "Throw your self down. For it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge concerning you,' and 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone." However, the Lord Jesus never performed miracles to show off but for love and compassion.
3. **The pride of life**: When the devil took the Lord Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if you will fall down and worship me." He wanted to tempt the King of the whole world by the glories of this vain world.

C. REJECTION OF HERESIES

"Little children, it is the last hour;
and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming,
even now many antichrists have come,
by which we know that it is the last hour." (v. 18)

"*It is the last hour." These are the last moments for the battle between God and* the devil. God extends His help to His children to give them victory over the devil, seeing that his days are coming to the end, stirs his spirit in the antichrist to defile the faith and life of God's children.

God's children love their father and consider the temporal life trifle. Seeing that their sojourn, no matter how long it is, yet one day it will end in Paradise, in eternity. St. John is encouraging his children not to be afraid of the attackers.

These things are not said of all who teach false doctrine but only of those who join a false sect after they have heard the truth, it is because they were once Christians that they are now called antichrists.

St. Didymus The Blind

Let us recall how long ago it was that John said that it is the last hour. If we had been alive then and heard this, how could we have believed that so many years would pass after it, and would not rather have hoped that the Lord would come while John was still present in the body?

St. Augustine

Why is the lamb offered up in the evening and not during the day? The reason is plain enough, for our Lord and Savior suffered his passion at the close of the ages, which is why John called it the last hour.

St. Jerome

"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 they might be made manifest,
that none of them were of us." (v.19)

Many of them have received the sacrament of baptism and used to participate of the holy sacraments, the fellowship of the holy of holies, but they were not of us. However, those who went out from us but came back repenting, are not against Christ for they could not live without Him.

Those who are against Christ are those who insisted to leave Him, to manifest that none of them were of us.

They were not of us, but they did not appear like that**.**

This verse makes it plain that all who are known to have withdrawn from the love and the unity of the universal church are adversaries of the Lord and the antichrists.

St. Cyprian

"They went out from us; but they were not of us" neither the apostate angels, nor men falling away; " but that they may be manifested that they are not of us." With sufficient clearness he distinguishes the class of the elect and that of the lost, and that which remaining in faith "has an unction from the Holy One," which comes through faith. He that abides not in faith.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One,
and you know all things." (v. 20)

This anointing is the Holy Spirit who is in us. He reveals the mysteries of God in the heart, teaches us, makes us taste the sweetness of His fellowship, and opens our minds so we may learn everything. 19

All have been anointed, not only the prophets and the holy men who lived in their days but also and especially all those who later believed in the great and only true anointed one, Christ, our God and Savior, along with those who continue to believe in him. For in the divine washing of regeneration and baptism when we are symbolically anointed with myrrh, we receive His inheritance by the Holy Spirit and his rich gifts, by which we know that we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

St. Severus of Antioch

"I have not written to you because you do not know the truth,
but because you know it,
and that no lie is of the truth." (v. 21)

We do not need new teachings but we need the work of the Holy Spirit who reminds us of the truth and grants us discernment to reject all foreign teachings.

It is not true that sometimes we ought to lie. What is not true we should never try to persuade anyone to believe.

St. Augustine

You all know the truth because you received it in the rule of faith, which you professed at your baptism.

Hilary of Arles

"Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?
He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.
Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either;
he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also." (v. 22, 23)

The liar is the one who rejects the truth denying that Jesus is the Christ, that is, rejecting the Lord as his Savior, denying His incarnation and rejecting the work of Christ in his life, so he goes astray in spite of him being called a Christian. Those confess that they know God, but by their works reject Him. (Tit. 1:16)

Whoever rejects Christ does not enjoy the Father nor the Son for "Nor does any one know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." (Matt. 11:27)

"He who denies the Son," by ignoring Him, "has not the Father, nor does he know Him." But he who knows the Son and the Father, knows according to knowledge, and when the Lord shall be manifested at His second advent, he shall have confidence and not be confounded. Which confusion is heavy punishment?

St. Clement of Alexandria

D. OUR ABIDING IN GOD

"Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.
If what you heard from the beginning abides in you,
you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.
And this is the promise that He has promised us, eternal life." (v. 24, 25)

We should abide in what we have heard from the beginning and what we have received from the previous generations. By abiding in the Orthodox Faith and life in Him, we abide in the Son and in the Father, looking for the promise which we desire which is "eternal life."

"These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you." (v. 26)

The purpose of his writing is to direct the attention of the believers so that the heretics may not deceive them by their tricky methods.

"But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you,
and you do not need anyone to teach you;
but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things,
and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you,
you will abide in Him." (v. 27)

The believers have the anointing of the Holy Spirit steadfast in them, and they do not need any foreign teachings, which have reached up to approximately to 600 denominations. We should stick to what the Holy Spirit has delivered to us, the spirit of truth, which has no deception, which "is true and is not a lie," so all teachers serve the One Teacher who is Christ. (Matt. 23:10)

Let us abide in that teaching, "as it has taught you, you will abide in Him."

4. THE LOVERS OF GOD AND THEIR ADOPTION TO HIM

"And now little children, abide in Him,
that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.
If you know that He is righteous,
you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him." (v. 28, 29)

When God's lovers abide in His words by the anointment that is steadfast in them, then:

A. They have hope and desire for His coming, as a bride waits for her bridegroom, to live in His bosom, seeing Him face to face in the eternity.

B. Knowing that He is righteous, the children do not accept to be like their father, so they struggle, being stubborn for righteous works, by the power of the anointment in them.

When the Lord appears at His second advent, the one who knows the Son and the Father according to the knowledge will have confidence and will not be confounded, for confusion is a great punishment.

St. Clement of Alexandria

Chapter Three
THE ADOPTION TO THE FATHER

St. Paul is addressing the issue of our adoption to God:

us the adoption.v. 1, 2
as children of God
purityv. 3
g sinv. 4, 5
C. Resembling Him in doing good deeds and acts of love.v. 6 -12

1. GOD'S LOVE GRANTED US THE ADOPTION

Since St. John ended the previous chapter by saying, "Everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him," now he talks about our position toward God, knowing between two spiritual families in the world, one belongs to God and the other belongs to Satan.

We, as believers, were baptized in His name and became members in His Mysterious Body, thus we were transferred to the adoption of God. St. Paul said, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:26,27)

This privilege is for us, regardless of our condition. Nevertheless, if we live not befitting our Heavenly Father, then we are not abiding in our Father. In this situation, the adoption is not denied but rather becomes a great judgment on us. A son may hurt his father and he may not get the inheritance and may be rejected from the presence of his father, however, his relationship to his father continuously bothers his conscience.

Let us walk worthy of being children to such a Great Father. See how He lowered Himself to become our Father! We have our Father in heaven, so let us heed to abide worthy of such an adoption so we may get the inheritance.

St. Augustine

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us,
that we should be called children of God!" (v. 1)

What an honor for us to become children of the Creator! This free gift granted to us is indescribable. Let us work hard to become worthy of that name.

"For the world knows us not, as it knew Him not." He means by the world those who live a worldly life in pleasures

St. Clement of Alexandria

How do those who are called children benefit, while the adoption is not working in them?

Many are called physicians but do not know how to treat people! Many are called watchful, but in fact they are asleep the whole night!

Many are called Christians by name, but they are not Christians in their life, in their conduct, in their faith, in their hope nor in their love!

Anyone who abides in righteousness and despises the evil in the world, and does not accept to become drunk nor to defile himself is mocked by those who commit such defilement.

"Therefore, the world does not know us,
because it did not know Him." (v. 1)

Who is for the world? He means those who love the world and are attached to it.

"Because it did not know Him." The Lord Jesus Christ, in the flesh, stayed in the world, but He was not known. Why? Because He rebuked the people for their transgression, for their desire for lust made them not know Him, and made them sick and they hurt the Physician.

St. Augustine

This is what the Evangelist said in John 1:10, and what the Lord emphasized saying, "O Righteous Father, the world does not know You." (John 17:25) Those who love the world have another father beside God, who occupies their hearts. The Lord said to the wicked Jews, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do." (John 8: 42-44)

Since the wicked people cannot know God, then how can they know His children?

But this does not scare God's people, for though they were deprived of the love of the wicked, yet they found themselves the center of attention of God's love and all His saints. Therefore, the apostle calls them "Beloved."

This hatred from the wicked people does not occupy the minds of God's children.

The "**world**" means those who live in pleasure.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"Beloved, now we are children of God;
and 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." (v.2)

The minds of God's children are occupied with a serious matter, which is the eternal life where they meet their Father and become like Him and they see Him face to face.

They will see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads (Rev. 22:4) "Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body…" (Phil. 3:21) It is not appropriate, as the bride of Christ and His child, to be occupied with earthly matters nor with the annoyances of the wicked people, as long as we direct our attention toward the beauty of the Lord, saying "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." (Ps. 17:15)

By writing these things John is exhorting his reader to recognize what it means to be born again of God. He tells them that they are worthy to be loved as children of God, even in this world, and that the adoption of sons is reality here and now. For since we now know in part and have the first fruits of the Spirit, we already have something of the adoption of sons and can see what the fullness of it will be like when it arrives.

St. Didymus The Blind

We shall still have no natural equivalence with him. For the created nature must always be less than the Creator.

St. Augustine

We live as children of God even in this present life, sanctifying ourselves by virtue and striving toward the likeness of something even better. Encouraged by this, we shall be fashioned according to the brightness of the resurrection, when we shall see him, insofar as that is possible.

St. Severus of Antioch

"Beloved," says he, "now are we the sons of God," not by natural affection, but because we have God as our Father. For it is the greater love that, seeing we have no relationship to God, He nevertheless loves us and calls us His sons. "And it has not yet appeared what we shall be;" that is, to what kind of glory we shall attain. "For if He shall be manifested," that is, if we are made perfect, "we shall be like Him," as reposing and justified, pure in virtue, "so that we may see Him" (His countenance) "as He is," by comprehension.

St. Clement of Alexandria

2. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS CHILDREN OF GOD

A. We resemble God in purity:

We were reconciled with God through Jesus Christ and we were granted adoption to God, through baptism. When our eyes are elevated to heavenly matters, then, through hope, we live as befitting to the children of the Holy God, and then we live a holy life.

"And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure." (v. 3)

His sayings, "purifies himself" emphasizes our participation in the behavior. Since we cannot be purified except by the Holy God, but we will not be purified unless we accept that and respond to God's work, struggling and persevering.

We shall see Him as He is because we shall be like Him. This is our hope for the future, our love in the present and our faith in both the past and the present.

Hilary of Arles

B. We resemble God our Father being sinless

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (v.4)

Lawlessness means rebellions, so one commits sins with rebellion. This is not appropriate for the children, for the Lord Jesus came to abolish the dominion of sin.

John says that sin and iniquity are the same thing , though there were heretics who denied many thing. According to some of them , iniquity was a crime deliberately committed, but sin was a fact of nature and therefore not a crime.

Hilary of Arles

"And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins,
and in Him there is no sin." (v. 5)

He came to remove the thorn of sin and to declare that He is without sin, so we may follow His footsteps and abide in Him and we, too, become without sin. But this does not mean that we are sinless!

C. God's children practices righteousness and are loving

"Whoever abides in Him does not sin.
Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.
Little children, let no one deceive you.
He who practices righteousness is righteous,
just as He is righteous.
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.
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." (6-9)

We can summarize these verses as follows:

1. Whoever abides in the light cannot sin.
2. Whoever is born of God cannot sin.
3. Whoever is born of God keeps himself and the devil cannot touch him. (1 John 5:18)
4. Whoever sins does not know God nor has seen Him.

Just as the person who dwells in virtue and true doctrine does not sin and is not ignorant, so the one who remains in Christ, who is his righteousness and sanctification, does not sin. For how can someone act unrighteous when he is in the company of righteousness, and how can he be content to place corruption alongside holiness? Therefore anyone who sins is outside Christ has no part or fellowship in him.

St. Didymus The Blind

5. Whoever commits sin is from the devil.

Since the devil was first and foremost sent into the world in order to lead people astray, that is where his name, seducer, comes from. Thus anyone who sins can be called a devil. Sin is not inherited in the human race, since if it were it could not have been eradicated by a sinless human being. But this is exactly what happened when the Son of God appeared in human flesh, and so sin must be regarded as accidental to human nature, not as intrinsic to human nature.

St. Didymus The Blind

If we read those verses away from the rest of the Scriptures, we may fall in despair, because these verses imply that anyone who commits any sin (for whoever stumbles in one has transgressed the whole Law) is not a son of God, but becomes a son of the devil.

Interpreting those verses away from the rest of the Scripture drove some people to heresy by saying that there are two kinds of baptism: one is baptism by water, and the one who is dipped in it is susceptible to sin and does not enjoy salvation. The second is baptism by the Spirit, and the one who enjoys that cannot sin and does not fall into temptation.

They justify that by saying that if through the baptism by water, one is born a new birth, then why does those who are baptized commit sin, although God's children do not sin? They think that they need the baptism of the Spirit.

However, we question why didn't the Lord Jesus, in His talk with Nicodemus, say that after someone is baptized by water, he is not born by the Spirit, but He said, "Whoever is born of the water and of the spirit," without separating them. The spirit never mentioned it in the Holy Bible nor in the history of the church nor with the apostles nor their successors that they used to baptize by water and then baptize.

If this saying were true, does this mean that whoever commits sin needs to be baptized by the spirit? Do the following verses mean that the spirit did not baptize St. Paul? : "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," and "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells." (Rom. 7:18)

Why did the Lord Jesus not request from the bishops or angels of the seven churches to be baptized by the spirit? He only asked them to repent.

Do all these numerous warnings that the Bible is directing to all believers mean that the spirit does not baptize them?

The holy baptism is a perfect act and grants us perfection; nevertheless, it does not perfect a man who is negligent in fulfilling the commandments.

St. Mark the Recluse

One has a free will to do whatever he wants, even after he is baptized, for baptism does not deprive us from our freedom. When the Holy Scriptures say, "The kingdom of heaven suffers

violence," (Matt. 11:12), this pertains to the private will of every individual, so that each one, after baptism, abides in the good and moves away from evil.

The Lord commands the believers, who received power to fulfill the commandments, to keep struggling so they do not drift away.

Through baptism, you have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), and cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. (2 Cor. 10:5) Since you have received that power to conquer and you have not used it to conquer all the evil arguments, then it is obvious that you love lust and have no faith.

When we are persuaded by the devil to sin, we receive his seed. But when we go on to complete the work, which he urged, then he has begotten us, for through sin we are born to him as children.

Origen

"He that does unrighteousness is of the devil," that is, of the devil as his father, following and choosing the same things. "The devil sins from the beginning," he says. From the beginning from which he began to sin, incorrigibly persevering in sinning.

He says, "Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for His seed remains in him;" that is, His word in him who is born again through faith.

St. Clement of Alexandria

What is the interpretation of the previous verses?

1. St. Augustine's opinion:

[St. John said: "Whoever has been born of God does not sin." (1Jn. 3:9), and in the same time he says, " If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1Jn. 1:10) Is there a contradiction between these two verses?

If one says that he is a sinner, he is afraid lest others may think that he is not born of God. And if one says that he does not sin, we make God a liar.

St. John means a specific sin which God's son cannot commit. When one commits that sin, he is guilty of all, that is, of breaking all the commandments. But what is the commandment? A new commandment I give to you that you love one another." (John 13:34)]

Hence, **St. Augustine** sees that it is impossible for one not to love his brothers. If one does not love his brothers, then he has wandered from love.

Fr. Sheremon asked those who are baptized to resemble God by showing inner love toward good and bad people.

2. The opinion of Pope Athanasius the Apostolic:

St. Athanasius said: [The Word put on flesh, healing every bite of the serpent, removing every evil which stems from the emotions of the flesh, abolishing death which accompanies sin. As St. John wrote, "The Son of God was manifested to abolish the deeds of Satan."]

This is the capability granted to us as children of God, so we can conquer the deeds of Satan by the power of the Lord Jesus, according to our will, that is if we abide in Him.

3. The opinion of Tertullian:

[St. John confirms that we do not sin. He tackled that, in details, so we may not heed to sin, clarifying that the Lord Jesus has overcome sin so we may abide in the light.

Nevertheless, there are some daily sins which man commit, and we all submit to them. If God does not forgive us those sins, salvation would be impossible for everyone.]

4. The Opinion of St. Jerome

Jovinanius' reasoning was that since man was baptized, Satan cannot make him fall." But he added: "When one is tempted, then he is baptized by water and not by the spirit, as with the case

of Simon the magician. St. John wrote, “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. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest…” (1 John 3:9,10) At the end he said, “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.” (1 John 5:18)

This would have been difficult if St John did not continue, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” (1 John 5:21) If the one born of God cannot sin and the devil cannot touch him, how come St. John is warning them to keep themselves from temptations?!

In the same Epistle, we also read, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8-10)

I assume that St. John was baptized and that he is writing to baptize people. I assume that every sin is from the devil; St. John confesses that he is a sinner and hopes for forgiveness after his baptism.

What do I say, my brother Jovinanius? Does the apostle contradict himself? Never! But he clarifies himself by saying, “My little children, these things I write to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” (1 John 2: 1, 6)

The reason for my writing to you that “whoever is born of God does not sin” is that you do not sin, so that you may know that as long as you sin, that you are not dwelling in the new birth that He has granted you.

Truly, those who abide in that birth do not sin, for “what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial?” (2 Cor. 6:14,15) As light is completely different from darkness, so righteousness from evil, sin from good deeds, and Christ from antichrist.

If we let Christ dwell in our hearts, then we expel the devil out.

If we sin and the devil enters from the door of sin, then Christ, immediately, leaves. David the Prophet said, “Restore unto me the joy of your salvation.” (Ps. 51:12), that is, restore unto me the joy, which I have lost due to sin.

He also said, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.” (1 John 2:4) Christ is called the Truth (John 14:6), so in vain you glory in the One whom you do not keep His commandments.

It is not a great matter to know the One God, for even the devils believe and fear. But “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” (1 John 2:6)

Jovinanius has to choose between two matters: Is he abiding in Christ or no? If he abides in Christ, then he has to walk just as He walked. But, if he neglects the virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ, then he is not abiding in Him, because he is not walking just as Christ walked. “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth, who when he was reviled, did not revile in return…” (1 Pet. 2:22,23) “The ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in Me.” (John 14:30)

Let us reflect at what was written in the Epistle St. James, “For we all stumble in many things.” (James 3:2) No one is pure even if his life on earth is just one day. (Job 14:4,5)

Lest we fall in despair and think that if we sin after baptism, we will not be saved, he said, “And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate (Lawyer) with the Father…” (1 John 2:1) St. John directed this saying to those who are baptized. He is promising them a Lawyer to defend them. He does

not say, “You have an Advocate…,” but “We have an Advocate…,” so that no one may think that this saying is directed to only those who are baptized but have no true faith.

It is vain to have an advocate if it is impossible for us to commit sin. In the Lord’s Prayer, we say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” If after baptism, we do not sin, then we wouldn’t ask for forgiveness for sins which were erased in baptism! Why, then, do we pray for not entering into temptation but to be delivered from evil, if the devil does not tempt us?

St. Paul, the chosen vessel, subdues his flesh lest after he preaches to others, he may be a castaway. (1 Cor. 9:27) Also, he was given a thorn in the flesh lest he should be exalted above measure (2 Cor. 12:7). He also writes to the Corinthians, “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:3) In another verse, he writes, “Lest Satan should take advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.” (2 Cor. 2:11) Also, “Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor. 10:12)

He also wrote to the married people, “… so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self- control.” (1 Cor. 7:5)

He also writes to the Ephesians, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12) After all these warnings, does any one think that we are safe and can sleep and relax, after we are baptized?

He also said in his Epistle to the Hebrews, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” (Heb. 6:4-6) We cannot deny that those who are enlightened are those who are baptized, so how can the baptized not sin, since St. Paul writes, “if they fall away”?

Vontenyanos and Novatios smile at this saying that it is impossible to renew (mentally) once more, through repentance, those who have crucified the Lord and put Him to shame.

To correct this misunderstanding, it was written, “But beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. 6:9,10) If God punishes for sin and does not reward for good deeds, then we would have said that God is unjust. But the apostle is telling them that he wants them to be more cautious, lest they despair. It is not just that God will forget their good deeds, for they truly have ministered to the saints, and only remember their sins.

St. James teaches that those who are baptized can be tempted and fall in sin, by their own free will. He said, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:12) Lest we think we are tempted by God, as it was written about Abraham in the book of Genesis, St. James added, “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death.” (James 1:13-15)

God has created you with a free will, so you are free to choose whether virtue or vice, and you are not forced to choose one over the other, or else there would be no crown.]

Conclusion:

We conclude that St. John is directing our attention to baptism, reminding us of the adoption and the capabilities of following the footsteps of the Lord. Sin has no more dominion over us, as St. Paul wrote, "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, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2:14,15) Hence, we can all love and do not accept except love.

Sin has no more dominion over us (Rom. 6:14), for the new man can crush sin and its thorn, and we can live by the Lord Jesus abiding in the Spirit.

This capability is by our own choice as children of God who do not sin as long as we are abiding in the Lord. The moment we sin, we deviate from our true position as children, yet in spite of that, the road for tears is open.

True love is the dividing line between God's children abiding as children and between the devil's children abiding in sin and hatred. That is why St. John wrote,

John did not say this with respect to the existence of sin in our lives, as if our nature were cover with implausibility. Rather he means that insofar as someone who is born of God retains the grace of his new birth he cannot sin in the way he behaves. And the reason for this is that God's seed dwell in him. What is this seed of God, which dwells in believers? What else but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by which we have been born again? These presences never leave us.

St. Severus of Antioch

"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest.
Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God,
nor is he who does not love his brother." (v. 10)

Love is the trait of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby we grow as long as we abide in the Lord. However, whoever does not love is deviated toward the road of the devil, rejecting the adoption of God and accepting the adoption of the devil.

Let us train ourselves to love the brothers. If you love your brother, you will see God, for through your love to your brother, you will see God. By loving your brother, you will see love in which God abides.

St. Augustine

Since a person who walks in righteousness is born of God, it follows that someone who is so born will love his brothers. Someone who lacks righteousness because he does not practice it, but instead hates his brother, is not born of God.

St. Didymus The Blind

"Thus we know the children of God, as likewise the children of the devil," who choose things like the devil; for so also they are said to be of the wicked ones.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning,
that we should love one another,
not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother.
And why did he murder him?
Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous." (v. 11, 12)

Cain did not know love. However, the offerings of Abel were accepted because of love. Both have presented offerings, one presented the fruits of the ground while the other presented the firstborn of his flock. Do you think that God hates the fruits of the ground and loves the flock?

Of course not! God does not look at the hands, which carry the offering, but at the heart. The Lord accepts the one who presents the offering from a loving heart, but rejects the one who presents the offering from an envious heart. St. John means the works of Abel were righteous because they were deeds of love, but the works of Cain were evil because they were works of hatred to his brother. He did not only envy him and hate him but also killed him. So Cain was the son of the devil and Abel was the son of God.

St. Augustine

God's children are characterized by love, while the devil's children are characterized by hatred.

"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you." (v.13) Those who are attached to the world, that is the evil, have no true love and cannot tolerate God nor His children.

If we have passed from death to life by passing from unbelief to faith, let us not be surprised if the world hates us. For no one who has failed to pass from death to life, but has remained in death, can someone love those who have left the darkened house of death.

Origen

It is not to be wondered as if evil people, who are here called the "world," hate those who live godly lives according to the commands of Christ. It would be much more surprising if such people loved us instead!

St. Didymus The Blind

"We know that we have passed from death to life,
because we love the brethren." (v. 14)

We who abide in the Lord Jesus, the source of our life, love the brothers, and hence we enjoy life and are transferred from death, which is burial in sin and surrendering to it.

Whoever loves his brothers in God's way has passed from death to life, but whoever does not have this love remains in death. In the same way the widow who enjoyed herself was dead, even if technically she was alive (1Tim.5:6). For anyone who lives like that has obviously forgotten God.

St. Didymus The Blind

"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer." (v. 15)

Murder stems from hatred, therefore, he who hates, even if he does not kill his prey, is considered a murderer.

St. Jerome

Thus, his heart remains in death. If this is an act of love and this is the end of hatred, how, then, can we act lovingly? You may not have prepared any poison or committed a crime. You have only hated, and in doing so, you have killed yourself first of all.

St. Augustine

"Every one who hates his brother is a murderer." For in him through unbelief Christ dies. Rightly, therefore, he continues, "And you know that no murderer and unbeliever has eternal life abiding in him." For the living Christ abides in the believing soul.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"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." (v. 16)

The Lord loved the servants to the point of death, so that the servants may follow the footsteps of their Master, and they love their colleagues, the other servants. The Lord Jesus said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:12, 13)

St. John, wanting to train us for the practical love, asked us to start by giving. He said:

We have been given the privilege of being able to lay down our lives for our brothers. But are you prepared to die for Christ?

St. Augustine

"For He Himself laid down His life for us;" that is, for those who believe. If then He laid down His life for the apostles, he means His apostles themselves: us if he said, We, I say, the apostles, for whom He laid down His life, "ought to lay down our lives for the brethren;" for the salvation of their neighbors was the glory of the apostles.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"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?" (v. 17)

When we taste love, through our material giving, then we enjoy giving and realize the inner satisfaction, and we can love our brothers and God to the point of death.

God does not require giving for the sake of feeding the poor, but to present to Him the offering of our sweet love so He may accept it. As St. Paul wrote, "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account." (Phil. 4:17)

The second reason is what **St. John Chrysostom** wrote: [It teaches you how to resemble God, and this is the source of all goodness.]

The third reason is that we share in the sufferings of the other members of the body of Christ.

. If alms given to the least are given to Christ, there is no reason for anyone to prefer earthly things to heavenly ones or to place human things before divine ones.

St. Cyprian

"My little children let us not love in word or in tongue,
but in deed and in truth." (v. 18)

If we love our brothers, in deed and in truth, that is in Christ Jesus, and not in vain glory, then we know that we are abiding in Christ "The Truth," and our hearts are confident before God who examines the hearts.

In loving our brothers, we do not ask for the praise of men and their testimony, for they do not know our inner motives, but we ask for God's testimony, "But our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience…" (2 Cor. 1:12), that is, our inner private glory which no one knows except God and us.

It is not enough to have good intentions. You must also put them into effect with genuine willingness and a happy heart.

St. John Chrysostom

Actions speak louder than words.

Hilary of Arles

"For if our heart condemns us,
God is greater than our heart,
and knows all things." (v. 20)

If through our inner life, we realize that our motives in doing good deeds are not correct, then let us bow to the Lord and confess our weaknesses, in spite of the praise of men to us, for He is greater than our hearts and able to correct our motives.

He says, "For God is greater than our heart;" that is, God's power is greater than the consciences that belong to the soul, because God's love knows everything.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us,
we have confidence toward God." (v. 21)

If our hearts testify that we truly love God, then we have confidence, not only toward men, but toward God also.

Our conscience gives us a true answer, which we love and that genuine love is in us, not affected but sincereness, seeking our brother's salvation and expecting nothing from him except his salvation.

St. Augustine

As long as you are in this life, do not ignore or reject the warning of your conscience. For if you do so, when you have run your course, your conscience will rise up against you and accuse you before your Judge, and thrust you in front of the judge's sentence and turn you to eternal punishment. You will not have to endure this if along the way you show yourself kindness toward this adversary and accept his well-intended which rebukes with gratitude.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

D. Our Trust in God our Father:

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him,
because we keep His commandments
and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (v. 22)

When we love God, we keep His commandments. He is pleased with us, and does not make us in need of anything, but trusts us with everything, since we are faithful in our love to our brothers.

What are the things that are pleasing in His sight?

1. To believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, that is, to accept Him as a Savior and Redeemer, as a propitiation for our sins. ***"And this is His commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ…" (v. 23)***
2. To love our brothers so we may enjoy God's love to us. ***"And love one another as He gave us commandment." (v. 23)*** By keeping this commandment, that is, by believing in His Son Jesus Christ and loving the brothers, we abide in Him and He in us, for he said,

"Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him
and He in him.
And by this we know that He abides in us by the Spirit
whom He has given us." (v. 24)

Our abiding in Him is not mere words or imagination, but requires our keeping His commandments, which focus on love. Who can love except by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us.

By this Holy Spirit, we are cleansed and nourished. This is the Sprit of God which all the heretics have rejected by their disobedience to the church; they became straw not wheat, in spite of their existence among her.

St. Augustine

"And hereby we know that He dwells in us by His Spirit, which He has given us;" that is, by superintendence and foresight of future events.

St. Clement of Alexandria

Chapter Four
LOVE IN WISDOM

St. John is urging us for "Love," so he addresses:

1. Love and wisdom: Love means rejecting what is against the Spirit of God. v. 1-6
2. The source of true love is the cross:v. 7-11
3. How to taste love?
a. Through our love to our brothers:v.12-16
b. By joyfully waiting for the Lord's Day:v. 17-21

1. LOVE AND WISDOM

"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." (v. 1)

Love grants one simplicity so one believes everything. However, one has to discern and be wise so he is not deceived by false prophets who disguise themselves under the name of "Christ" and the word "love," to hide their poison in enticing words and false philosophy, claiming that they are guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord has warned us by saying; "Take heed that no one deceives you, for many will come in My name saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." (Matt. 24: 4, 5)

Also, The Wise Solomon warns us not to drink from strange water, even if it appears to be sweet and holy. (Prov. 9:18) The Lord referred to the Holy Spirit by water (John 7:37). Therefore, let us beware from those who claim that the spirit guides them and they are strangers from the church.

St. Paul was concerned about the church so he said, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it!." (2 Cor. 11: 2-4)

He is afraid, that through her simplicity, she may accept another Christ or another spirit or another gospel. He is not a different one but they interpret it with their own understanding. (Gal. 1: 6-9) The danger is that they transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. (2 Cor. 11: 13,14)

First, we must scrutinize thoroughly anything that appears in our hearts, as well as anything that is said to us. Has it come purified by the divine and heavenly fire of the Holy Spirit? Or does it lean toward Jewish superstition? Is its surface piety something, which has come down from bloated worldly philosophy? We must examine all this most carefully, doing as the apostle bids us.

Some may be deceived by that kind of doctrine, which may appear to have proper meanings relating to religion, for they are enticed by the good organization and philosophical teachings. Also, we have to beware lest a false interpretation is put for the pure gold of the word of God, which is the Holy Bible.

Abbot Moses

But you may wander, but what are the signs of the true spirit?

Just as in ancient Israel there were some prophets who spoke the world of God and others who did not, so also, as soon as the apostles appeared, speaking in Christ and having the Holy Spirit whom the Lord had given to them, many false apostles were sent by the devil to counterfeit the teaching of the gospel. It is essential to have that gift of the Holy Spirit, which is called the discernment of spirits in order to, have the ability to test the spirits, to see which ones are to be believed and which ones are to be rejected.

St. Didymus The Blind

"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." (v. 2, 3)

The true teacher is the one who testifies to the Lord Jesus Christ who came to the world to save us. As St. Augustine said that there are many heresies that do not deny that Christ came in the flesh, but they deny His divinity or the divinity of the Holy Spirit like Arianism or the followers of Sableanus. Are these heresies from God?

No doubt they are not from us. They came out of the church, the one body of Christ, but had different faith and opposite thoughts, thus they became against Christ, even if they relate themselves to Christ.

Now, there are more than 600 denominations, so **how do we know the true faith from the fake faith?**

Let us return to the faith of the One Church, with the spirit of the one church and the one thought from one end of the world to the other, before the schism of the council of Chalcedon in the fifth century. Through the first four centuries, in spite of the widespread of the church from east to west, and in spite of the various environments and the numerous parishes and the multitude of the clergy and the Christian writings, yet the church was characterized by the one thought. No wander if the writings of St. Basil, the Archbishop of Caesarea, Hilary, the bishop of Poatier, and John Chrysostom , the Archbishop of Constantinople, St. Athanasius the Apostolic, Pope of Alexandria, St. Cyril the Great etc., and thousands more of the fathers have interpreted and sent letters with the same meaning, as if they were all disciples in one school, and all had one mind.

This is the truth which the one church has absorbed and which every generation delivers to the next generation. That is why we are disciples to our Fathers, without any sense of pride or arrogance, which drove many to publish the writings of the early Fathers.

Let us beware from the deceivers who depend on their own power to convince others and beware of their outward appearance. Do not fear nor worry, as St. John said:

Everyone who shall not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is antichrist. Whoever shall not confess the testimony of the cross is of the devil. Whoever shall pervert the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the firstborn of Satan.

St. Polyacarp of Smyrna

If a spirit dissolves the divine-human unity of Christ and thinks that the pure Word of God is outside all flesh, and cannot really be a man, and states that everything done in his incarnation is a fantasy, then that spirit is not from God. But someone will say that there are many heretics

who do accept the incarnation, the Montanists for instance. The answer to them is that just as no one says that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit, so the Montanists do not accept all the implications of incarnation belief. For those who say that Jesus is Lord but who do not follow his commandments does not have the Holy Spirit. Although they honor him with their lips, their hearts are far from him.

St. Didymus The Blind

"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." (v. 4)

St. John is encouraging us by saying that He who is in us, is the Spirit of truth who is never defeated, and whereby we become members in the mysterious Body of Christ. He said, "I have overcome the world." (John 6:33) Through Him, we have the spirit of triumph over the evil in the world.

God's power to save is always much greater than the devil's power to do harm.

Hilary of Arles

"They are of the world.
Therefore, they speak as of the world,
and the world hears them." (v. 5)

They are of the world. We do not mean all those who are living in the world, but those whose hearts are attached to the temporal worldly matters. Therefore, their motives in ministry are worldly, either for material or political gain (as some of the foreign missionaries, unfortunately), or for their ego and self-righteousness.

They use deceitful means which appear to be full of gentleness, but without any inner true love.

"We are of God.
He who knows God hears us;
he who is not of God does not hear us.
By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." (v. 6)

St. John emphasizes that "hearing" is where we draw the line between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Hearing "us," who are "we"? These are the apostles and the disciples who delivered the pure faith to the church. Let us all return to the apostolic faith, which was delivered once to the saints, rejecting every modern philosophical thought.

The word "*bear*" means that we should do what we hear. If someone does not know that he is supposed to act, he has not known that he is supposed to act, he has not really heard.

St. Didymus The Blind

2. TRUE LOVE

"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." (v. 7, 8)

St. John says, "Let us love," and not "try to love," for the ability to love is granted to us from God. By this love, we resemble our Father who is "love."

God is love and the fountain of all love. The Creator made love one of our traits, saying, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

St. Gregory Nezianzus

Whoever wants to talk about love has to talk about God Himself. Holy love is to resemble God, according to our ability.

St. John Climacus

St. Augustine says that a man may be baptized but does not respond to the work of the Holy Spirit inside him. Moreover, one may have the spirit of prophecy and prophecies like Saul (1 Sam. 19), and may partake of the Lord's Body and Blood without being worthy (1 Cor. 11:29), and may even relate himself to Christ so the name of God is blasphemed (Ex. 36: 20), but one thing one cannot do, which is to remain in the evil and still love. For the source of love is God and no one can commit evil and still have love. This is the true love, which God has declared to us.

We receive the seeds of this love in baptism and it grows in us by continuous repentance, by partaking in the holy sacrament, and by persistent prayers. This love is a gift from God who loves us!

Because God is love; the one who lives in love reaps the fruit of life from God. While still in this world, he even now breathes the air of the resurrection.

St. Isaac the Syrian

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us,
that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world,
that we might live through Him.
In this is love, not that we loved God,
but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (v. 9, 10)

True love was manifested on the cross. The Father loved us and sacrificed His Son for us. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

The Son: "Who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

Thus, we find in the cross the fountain of abundant love. The more we reflect on the cross, the more we feel embarrassed because of His unconditional and unlimited love. Since He loved us before we even know Him, it is appropriate for us to love, too.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (v. 11)

God loved us, the servants, although we do not deserve all that love, how much more we should love our brothers, regardless of their nature, condition, or their attitude toward us.

He loves all. As His children, we should be proud to follow His example and love our brothers as He loves us!

3. HOW DO WE TASTE LOVE?

1. Through our love to our brothers:

"No one has seen God at any time.
If we love one another,
God abides in us,
and His love has been perfected in us." (v. 12)

God's love is perfect, however, we do not enjoy that love unless we open our hearts to our brothers. By this love, our hearts are purified by the Holy Spirit, so we may see God. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."(Matt. 5:8)

Why does John say so much about loving our brothers, but nothing at all about loving our enemies? Reaching out to our enemies does not exclude loving our brothers. Our love, like a fire must first take hold of what is nearest and then spread to what is further off.

St. Augustine

"By this we know that we abide in Him,

and He in us,

because He has given us of His Spirit." (v. 13)

When love abides in us, then we are working by the Holy Spirit given to us. "…The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Rom. 5:5) True love is the thermometer of our knowledge of our abiding in God.

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world." (v. 14)

Love was not abstract, but the disciples and the apostles have witnessed the greatness of God's love declared on the cross. The church has received this apostolic testimony to nurture her children by it, so they may grow on the example of their Father.

"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God,

God abides in him, and he in God." (v. 15)

Whoever accepts the testimony of the church and acknowledges the practical love of God declared in His salvation, God abides in him and he in God, and thus love is not strange from him but is inside him.

"And we have known and believed the love that God has for us.

God is love,

and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him." (v. 16)

When love abides in us, then we have known God, tasted Him, and believed in Him, thus we respond to Him more and more.

Those who have refused to be of one mind in the church of God cannot abide with God.

St. Cyprian

Why is it that theologians sometimes refer to God as Yearning or Love and sometimes as the Yearned-for or the Beloved? On the one hand, he cause, produces and generates what is being referred to, and on the other hand, he is the thing itself.

Pseudo - Dionysius

If God is love, as John says, then it must be that the devil is hatred. As he who has love has God, so he who has hatred has the devil dwelling in him.

St. Basil The Great

B. Through our joyfully waiting for the Lord's Day

"Love has been perfected in us in this:

that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment;

because as He is, so are we in this world." (v. 17)

Once we taste God's love and respond to it, then all our desire is to long for the Lord's Day with confidence, because we follow His example here on earth, therefore, we have a share with Him in the life to come.

It is good that we start with the fear of God, so we may fear the Lord's Day and become alert against our enemy, which is sin. The more we enjoy God's love and the love of our brothers, the more we yearn for the Lord and desire the kisses of the Bridegroom, joyfully waiting for the wedding day as a chaste virgin adorned with faith, hope and love.

Thus, fear is removed from us to be replaced by love, for the St. John Apostle said:

The perfection of a faithful man is love.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"There is no fear in love;

but perfect love casts out fear,
because fear involves torment.
But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (v. 18)

What John said is true. So if you do not want to have any fear, first of all see whether you have that perfect love which turns fear out of the door. But if fear is pushed out before such perfection is achieved, it is a matter of pride puffing up, not of charity building up. The more the love of God is increased, the more the fear is diminished. The less the love, the more is the fear. However, if there is no fear, there is no love. When we sew, a needle pokes the thread. If the needle does not come out, then the thread will not come out either. In the same manner, fear occupies the soul, but it does not remain but is replaced by love.

St. Augustine

Fear encourages the beginners to forsake their sin and wickedness. But for the advanced, their desire for the reward is their incentive to do good. However, the mystery of love is to alleviate the mind to be above all creatures, avoiding everything except God.

St. Mark the Recluse

He says, "Perfect love casts out fear." For the perfection of a believing man is love

St. Clement of Alexandria

"Because fear involves torment,"

When man knows his sin, he suffers, but when love enters the soul, it heals all the wounds of fear. The fear of God causes injuries, as the knife of the doctor, which removes the puss of the wound, even though it enlarges the wound. So let fear occupy us until it is replaced by love! There is a verse, which seems to be contradicting which is, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever…" (Ps. 19: 9) To explain the difference: the first kind of fear is where one fears lest he is thrown in Hades and is burnt by eternal fire with Satan and his soldiers. However, the second kind of fear is when one fears lest he loses goodness and God forsakes him, for he desires to enjoy God Himself. We can realize the difference between the two kinds of fear where perfect love casts out fear and the other kind of fear where fear is clean and enduring forever, by comparing them to two kinds of women:

a) A woman who desires to commit adultery, but she is afraid of her husband. She fears her husband but she still loves to commit sin. If she ever walks in sin, she is afraid lest he sees her, as some fear the coming of the Lord.

b) A woman who loves her husband and feels that she is indebted to him by her holy kisses, so she protects herself from adultery, desiring the coming of her husband and being with him.

Both of them fear their husbands, but the first one fears his punishment, while the second one fears lest he forsakes her.

The soul, which has the true fear groans saying, "I will sing of mercy and justice; to you O lord, I will sing praises. I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? (Ps. 101: 1) She walks in a perfect way, so she does not fear, for love casts out fear. When the Bridegroom comes to her arms, she fears but she feels secure. She fears not to be thrown in Hades, but to be without sin lest her Bridegroom forsakes her.

St. Augustine

Abbot Sheremon emphasizes the same meanings teaching us the value of the fear of God, clarifying the difference between the fear of the servants which is the beginning of the road and the perfect fear which stems from the great love, which the prophet has described as, "And the strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure." (Is. 33: 6) This is one of the attributes

of the Lord Jesus Himself, for it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him… the spirit of wisdom and understanding… the spirit of the knowledge and the of the fear of the Lord." (Is. 11: 2)

There is one who fears lest he is whipped; this is the fear of the servants. There is one who fears lest he loses; this is the fear of the slaves. There is who fears lest he offends someone; this is the fear of the righteous.

St. Phlioxinus

Though the apostles themselves had the Holy Spirit inside them, yet they were not free of fear (1 Cor. 9:17). Though they were full of joy, yet they were full of fear and awe too. (Phil. 2:12,13). They were nurtured by grace and not by the corrupt nature; this grace guarded them lest they drift away.

St. Makarios the Great

All the Cherubim and the heavenly hosts love God, yet they stand before Him in awe and trembling, not fearful of the fire of Hades, but out of respect and reverence.

Another interpretation:

Tertullian in his speech about persecution states that he refers to fear, in general meaning, that is, fear of one's temporal life. St. John is teaching us to sacrifice our life for the brothers (1 John 3:16). Moreover, we should sacrifice our life for the Lord. However, he who is afraid to suffer cannot be related to the One who suffered for us all. The one who is not afraid to suffer is perfect in love, that is, in the love of God.

"We love Him because He first loved us." (v. 19)

He loved us, while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:38), choosing us to become His bride. There is no merit if we love Him, but we pay Him back by loving His brothers.

"If someone says 'I love God' and hates his brother,
he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen,
how can he love God whom he has not seen?
And this commandment we have from Him:
that he who loves God must love his brother also." (v. 20, 21)

When we love our seen brothers, then the inner veil is removed, so our hearts may see God. By loving our brothers, we obey His commandment, and this proves our love to Him.

Why does a man not see God? Because he has not love. He has not love because he does not love his brother, and it follows that the reason for him not seeing God is that he does not love. The heart's eye must be continually cleansed and strengthened by love, in order to see that changeless being whose presence the lover may always delight and enjoy it in company of the angles for all eternity.

St. Augustine

Chapter Five

THE CAPABILITIES OF OUR FAITH IN THE INCARNATE LORD

In this chapter, the apostle is addressing the power of faith in the Lord Jesus the Son of God:

3. The basis of faith and witnessing to Himv. 6 - 10
. Faith and the gift of eternal lifev. 11 - 13
5. Faith and answering prayersv. 14 -15
6. Believers and their prayers for their brothersv. 16 - 18
7. Believers receive the enlightenment of knowledgev. 19 - 20

1. FAITH AND LOVE

"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." (v. 1)

After St. John addressed the issue of love, now he is correlating between faith, the birth from above, and love. Our second birth is based on our faith in the Lord Jesus that He is the Christ who has reconciled us with the Father. Thus, through baptism, we become children of the Father and love Him. Our love to the Father drives us to love the Son.

There is no love inside us toward God the Father except through faith in His Son.

St. Hilary of Poatier

Our love to God drives us to love our brothers. Our love to our brothers is not true unless if it is through our love to God, through His commandments.

This describes everyone who is born of God and does what God wants him to do.

St. Didymus The Blind

John immediately joined love to faith, because without love faith is useless. According to charity, faith belongs to Christians, but without love it belongs to the demons. Moreover, those who do not believe are even worse than the demons.

Caesarius of Arles

"By this we know that we love the children of God,
when we love God and keep His commandments." (v. 2)

By accepting the Head of the body, we accept the members of the body.

2. FAITH AND THE LIFE OF VICTORY

One may ask: "Who can fulfill God's commandments? Who can overcome the love of the world with all its temptations?

Through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who has overcome the world and still overcoming by His work in us. When we hide in Him, the narrow road becomes easy, the heavy burden becomes light, all the temptations of the world become as nothing, and all the afflictions of the world as the subject of our joy.

"For this is the love of God,
that we keep His commandments.
And His commandments are not burdensome.
For whatever is born of God overcomes the world.
And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.
Who is he who overcomes the world,
but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (v. 3, 4, 5)

The substance and ground of the love we ought to have for God is obedience to his commandments.

St. Didymus The Blind

Whoever climbs to the perfection of the Gospel rises to the highest level of virtue, overcoming every law, looking to what Moses has commanded as easy and simple, realizing that by his submission to the grace of the Savior, reaches to the condition of sublimation.

Thus, sin has no dominion over us, for the Holy Spirit given to us has poured the love of God in our hearts. (Rom. 5:5) We are no more concerned with any other matter and do not desire to do what is forbidden nor neglect what is commanded. But the divine love becomes all our goals and desire, and we never enjoy the trifle matters nor even ask for what is allowed…

The roots of sin do not perish under the Law, but under the grace; also the roots of the evil pertaining to the human will.

Abbot Theonas

No one dares to overcome the devil except the Son Jesus Christ who lived in the wilderness and overcame him. Hence, the human nature, in Christ Jesus, became triumphant and won the crown of victory. The Lord Jesus won Satan and crowned the head of human nature by the crown of triumph.

St. Cyril the Great

2. THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH AND WITNESSING TO HIM

"This is He who came by water and blood,
Jesus Christ, not only by water,
but by water and blood.
And it is the Spirit who bears witness,
because the Spirit is truth." (v. 6)

Our faith is based on the blood of Christ, our dying and burial with Him in baptism. Here the apostle St. John is distinguishing between the baptism of John by water for remission of sin (John 1: 31) and the baptism of the Lord Jesus, which is by water, and Spirit where we are buried with Christ and rose to a new inner man on the image of the Lord Jesus. This is the baptism, which is built on the cross of the Lord Christ.

The water in Marah was very bitter. When Moses cast the tree, its water became sweet, for water without the preaching of the cross is useless, in regard to salvation. But after the cross of salvation has consecrated the water, it becomes suitable to use in the baptismal front and the chalice of salvation. As Moses cast the wood in the water,

likewise the priest utters on the baptismal font by the testimony of the cross of the Lord, so the water becomes sweet due to the work of grace.

St. Ambrose

The Spirit testifies to that baptism and His testimony is right, not merely a testimony of words but by deed, for it is His act.

Entering the baptismal front, you do not only enter into simple water but you receive the salvation of the Holy Spirit, and you can reach perfection, without any obstacle.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

"For there are three who bear witness in heaven:
the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit,
and these three are one." (v. 7)

The Holy Trinity witnesses to the power of baptism in the New Testament, and this we have seen in the baptism of the Lord Jesus.

Baptism is the work of the Holy Spirit, who grants us the forgiveness of sins, and binds us with the Holy Trinity. Baptism is established on the work of the Holy Trinity, for it is based on the cross of Christ. The Father loves us and gave His Son for us. The Son sacrificed His life on the cross where He was pierced in His side and blood and water came out of His side (John 19:34), and the baptism was established on these.

The testimony of the Holy Trinity is not mere words but a positive testimony: testimony of acts and sacrifice for man so he may live as a son of God.

This heavenly testimony requires an earthly testimony, for St. John said:

The spirit is life, the water is regeneration and the faith, the blood is knowledge, and these three are one. In the Savior these are the saving powers, and life itself is found in the son.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"And there are three that bear witness on earth:
the Spirit, the water, and the blood,
and these three agree as one." (v. 8)

The three witnesses in baptism are: water, blood, and the Spirit, which are one. If any of these is removed, then there is no sacrament of baptism, for what is water without the cross of Christ? Just a material element without any act of mystery! There is no sacrament of renewal without water, for "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

St. Ambrose

What was it that flowed from Jesus' side if not the sacrament that believers receive? They are the Spirit, the blood and the water, the Spirit which He gave up, the blood and water which flowed from His side.

Saying that the three are one, he does not mean the general meaning of the spirit, the water, and the blood but the mysterious one.

The element of the Spirit, the element of the water, and the element of the blood are not one. However, sometimes, for example, we say that the rock and the water are one, meaning that Christ is the rock and the Holy Spirit is the water.

Who doubts that the rock and the water are different elements? But the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are one nature, therefore, we say that the rock and the water are one.

Three elements came out of the Lord's body, while He was hanging on the cross:

A. The Spirit, for it was written, “And bowing His head, He gave up His Spirit.” (John 19: 30)

B. Blood and water came out of His side.

These three are different elements, however, the unity implies that the mysterious Body of Christ, that is the church, abides in the Holy Trinity.

The Lord is Spirit (John 4:14); the blood means that the Son became flesh (John 1:14); the water refers to the Holy Spirit as the Lord Jesus has mentioned. (John 7:38)

No doubt that whoever believes in the Gospel does not doubt that the Holy Trinity is a witness. It is written about the Son, “I am the One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.” (John 8:18) “… The Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (John 15:26)

Those three witnesses are one, one in nature, one in essence, one in divinity.

St. Augustine

What was it that flowed from Jesus side if not the sacrament, which believers receive? The Spirit, the blood and the water-the Spirit which he gave up, the blood and water which flowed from his side. The church is signified as being from this blood and water.

St. Augustine

“For there are three that bear witness, the spirit,” which is life, “and the water,” which is regeneration and faith, “and the blood,” which is knowledge; “and these three are one.” For in the Savior are those saving virtues, and life itself exists in His own Son.

St. Clement of Alexandria

“If we receive the witness of men,
the witness of God is greater,
for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.” (v. 9)

Often we accept the witness of men, so how about the witness of the Father to His Son! The Father testified of His Son in His baptism, in the transfiguration, in His death and resurrection.

The testimony of men refers to the testimony of people like Moses and the prophets, who were all men of God.

Hilary of Arles

“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe, God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.” (v. 10)“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.” (10)

We do not need any external witness, when we believe in God, but the Spirit of God testifies in us with a practical experience , so we may trust the word of God, without any doubt. However, he who does not believe God makes Him a liar. We do not have to ask “how,” but with faith accept the Scripture.

God can never turn himself into a liar, because he is the essence of truth. But an unbelieving man is a liar, because he does not believe in the truth of God.

Hilary of Arles

4. FAITH AND THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE

“And this is the testimony: that 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. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." (v. 11-13)

The goal of our faith is to enjoy eternal life. This life is not a mere gift from God, but the Son of God Himself is our life, "This life is in His Son."

This is the purpose of the incarnation; the Lord came as the First-born; He died, and rose. By His ascension, He carried us in Him, for the Incarnate God rose to the highest heaven, where the eternal doors were opened and the heavenly hosts were astonished in front of the glory granted to human beings in the Person of the God Incarnate. The members of the mysterious Body rise up to the First-born and live there forever. 47

5. FAITH AND THE ANSWER OF PRAYERS

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (v. 14)

Father Isaac 48 said: {He commands us to have complete trust, without any doubt, regarding the answer of our prayers, which are not for our personal gain nor temporal rest but is in agreement with the will of God. The Lord's Prayer teaches us "You will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The words of St. Paul reminds us that, "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought…" (Rom. 8:26) Sometimes our requests are against our salvation, and due to the divine care, they are rejected, for God knows what is good for us more than we do. This is what happened with St. Paul when he pleaded with the Lord three times that the thorn in the flesh be removed from him, but the Lord allowed it for his own good. "Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'" (2 Cor. 12: 8,9)

Those who possess technical skills and know how to repair things are fully confident that when the need arises they will be able to do so. Similarly these holy men, John and other apostles, knew from their own experience that if they asked God for what was pleasing and acceptable to him, they would obtain it. For God is most generous to those who have this knowledge and will grant the requests of those who ask according to his will.

St. Didymus The Blind

He does not say absolutely what we shall ask, but what we ought to ask.

St. Clement of Alexandria

"And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." (v. 15)

The believer, who responds to the Spirit of God, learns what to ask from God, therefore, every thing which he asks is according to God's will and the Lord will answer him.

6. THE BELIEVERS AND THEIR PRAYERS FOR THEIR BROTHERS

"If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that." (v. 16)

St. Augustine said: {Even though the Lord commands us to pray for our very persecutors, this passage clearly shows that there are some brothers for whom we are not commanded to pray. We therefore must acknowledge that there are some sins among the brothers which are worse than persecution by enemies. I think that the sin of a brother is unto

death when anyone who has attained a knowledge of God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ opposes the brotherhood and is aroused by the fires of envy against that very grace by which he was reconciled to God.}

However, the sin, which does not lead to death, is when one does not fulfill all the duties of brotherly love due to weakness of the spirit.

We notice that St. Paul did not pray for Alexander the coppersmith. I presume that was because he had sinned a sin leading to death, that is, he opposed the fellowship of the Spirit, because of hatred. It was written, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words." (2 Tim. 4; 14,15) However, he prayed for others, for it is written, "At my first defense, no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them." (2 Tim. 4:16)

For this reason, the church prayed against the heretics, not as a revenge, for the church does not like revenge like her Bridegroom, but for fear of her simple children who are easily deceived by those heretics like Arius and Nestor.

The tradition of the Greek Fathers stated that the sin which leads to death is the sin which one deliberately commit and with no repentance.

That is why the church does not pray for those who commit suicide, for they insist to be in despair.

We notice that the apostle did not command not to pray for those who commit sin leading to death, but did not ask them to pray, leaving the option to the believer.

"All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death." (v. 17)

In the Greek language, the word "unrighteousness" means that one steps over the rights of others, and the word "sin" means that one disobeys God's commandment and will.

Any stepping over the rights of others is a sin because it contradicts the will of God, for He wants love to surround us. However, there are sins which do not lead to death, not because of their nature, but because they stem from weakness, and are unintentionally committed, or done out of ignorance in spite of our continuous repentance. This does not mean that we are not blamed for these sins, but we have to repent. That is why we pray every day saying, "Forgive us our sins."

7. THE BELIEVERS GRANTED SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT WITH THREE CORNERS

A. **"We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him." (v. 18)**

A. It was previously mentioned that the one born of God realizes the potential of the new birth, which is as a son, he does not sin as long as he abides in the Father. The moment he forgets his adoption and deviates from the Father, he falls. Here, St. John asks that the one born of God should struggle and keep himself from the evil of the world. When the devil sees his steadfastness in God, he cannot touch him.

If it is true that when someone does what is righteous his power to do so comes from God, and if it is also true that righteousness and evil cannot live together, then it is perfectly clear that as long as a person does such things he is righteous and does not sin. But because this ability is giving by grace and is not natural, John adds that the righteous person must watch out, so that evil will not touch him.

St. Didymus The Blind

B. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." (v. 19)

God's children realize that they are of God, not just by talking but by living with Him. Their outlook to "the world," does not mean "the human race," but those who are attached to the world and has chosen the kingdom of the wicked.

The "world," that is, those who love the world, are subjected to evil. This includes everybody, because we are all born under sin, which traces its origin to the disobedience of Adam. Many heretics claim that there is a creator god who made the world evil to begin with, but this is not so. The world refers to people, not to the materials substance of creation.

St. Didymus The Blind

"And the whole world lies in the wicked one;" not the creation, but worldly men, and those who live according to their lusts.

St. Clement of Alexandria

C. "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." (v. 20)

The believer knows who is the Lord Jesus. He is the truth, the Grantor of life. This is the inner enlightenment, in which the soul envisions that the Lord Jesus is the whole Truth so she may be satisfied with Him. He is the source of her life, hence she abides in Him and does not forsake Him.

The understanding which God gave, by which it is known that the true Son of God is coming, is the same as the mind of Christ.

St. Didymus The Blind

The Final Warning

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." (v. 21)

Here he reminds us that we are God's children when he says, "Little children."

It is not appropriate to submit ourselves to other things than the Father, for the idols mean submitting the heart to others than God.

He reminds us of our position as children of God, asking that our hearts become sanctified for Him. In the mean time, he encourages us to struggle and persevere. "Keep yourselves," so we may not accept anyone to replace God's place in our hearts.

The blessings of our Lord, through the prayers of St. John the Beloved and all the saints keep us all, Amen.

John did not tell us to keep away from worship, but from idols, that is, from their very likeness. For it is wrong for you, who are created in the image of he living God, to become the image of an idol and dead man.

Tertullian

The letter ends as it began, with an admonition to worship the one true God alone. Everything else that John says is contained in this one golden rule.

Hilary of Arles

"And the Son of God has come and given us understanding," which comes to us, that is, by faith, and is also called the Holy Spirit.

St. Clement of Alexandria