

I. Introduction.

A. Theme of 1 John: Christian assurance grounded in fellowship with God.

B. Introductory Notes. Having just read 2 Peter, one might think the theme of 1 John is too similar. Why would God address this again so soon? While the theme statements are different, 2 Peter includes a well-known section about Christian maturity as a safeguard against false teaching. It is effective as such because Christian maturity is a means by which we make our calling and election sure, in turn assuring the Christian that he has true faith, not the false faith of a hypocrite that will run after the false teacher. That is the reason Peter begins his letter addressing it to those who have “like precious faith.” His point about both assurance and holiness/obedience which safeguard the Christian against apostasy is that they are grounded in faith. John, however, addresses the Christian’s assurance of grace and salvation as the main point, rather than false teachers and false teaching, and subsumes obedience under that rubric. John does write because of a quite similar occasion, namely the false teaching and false teachers of Gnosticism. But, it brought about a different sort of reaction because the false teachers did not remain in the church, but left and took members with them. Now, John, looking at this similar occasion from a different angle, also addressed assurance with different emphasis, and with a different ground or foundation. As one reads through the first two paragraphs, it should be easy to pick out the ground of assurance John emphasizes: fellowship with God; not faith, but fellowship.

1. In the second paragraph, fellowship with God is defined as being in the light.

2. To be “in the light” is to be enlightened by God’s truth as a result of God’s regenerating work of power, and thus to continue walking with God according to His truth.

3. The three main categories by which John says the Christian can gain assurance of grace and

salvation are the right faith (i.e., the right belief in the right Christ), obedience to God, and love of the brethren. Look for these to be repeated in three cycles throughout the letter.

II. Fellowship with God Assured by Abiding in the Light.

- A. Abiding in the Light Proven by Obedience to God. AKA “righteousness” and abiding in His Word.
- B. Abiding in the Light Proven by Love.
 - 1. Love of the brethren. Positive side.
 - 2. Love NOT the world (2:15-17). Negative side.
- C. Abiding in the Light Proven by Right Belief. 2:18-24. Having the biblical gospel doctrine as an immovable conviction, especially the divine/human Person of Christ, that He is fully God in human flesh.
- D. Bonus: Eternal Life Assured by the Anointing Who Abides in You. 2:25-28. It brings confidence in Christian faith and life.

III. Fellowship with God Assured by Abiding in Righteousness. 2:29 - 3:24.

- A. Abiding in Righteousness Proven by the Father’s Love. It is also proven, in the context of the Father’s love, by the promise that we will be like Christ because we abide in Him. Sanctification follows; we grow in righteousness because we abide in Him.
- B. Abiding in Righteousness Proven by Hatred and Aversion to Sin. Accompanying this is the hatred of the world toward the Christian who abides in righteousness. Cf. John 15:10, 18-27; Matt. 5:10-12; etc. Also accompanying this is, simply, keeping God’s commandments.
- C. Abiding in Righteousness Proven by Faith (Belief). Because it is God’s command that we believe in His Son Jesus Christ, and by His grace through the saving work He has done in our hearts, we obey that command. This is why certain places, such as John 3:36, refers to obeying the gospel; it isn’t the Bible contradicting itself to say in one place that salvation is by faith alone and in another place that salvation is by works of obedience.

IV. Fellowship with God Assured by Abiding in Belief. 4:1-6.

V. Fellowship with God Assured by Abiding in Love.

- A. God Is Love.
 - 1. His love for us is given in Christ.
 - 2. This does NOT mean that God is ONLY love. “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His Being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 4). Love is subsumed under “goodness,” along with general benevolence, mercy, and grace.
 - B. Abiding in God Proven by Love for One Another. This is love produced by the Spirit of God indwelling us. Cf. Rom. 5:5; 1 John 4:19.
 - C. Abiding in Love for God Proven by Our Confession of Christ.
 - D. Abiding in Love for God Proven by Love of the Brethren. Note John’s reasoning in 4:18-21.
- VI. Fellowship with God Assured by the Interrelated Three Evidences Appearing in the Christian. Chapter 5:1-12. Thus, love for both the brethren and God is interrelated with obedience to God, which in turn is interrelated with faith.
- A. Fellowship with God Assured by the Interrelationship of Love for the Brethren and Obedience to God. 5:1-2.
 - 1. Note that the very nature of the regenerate believer will ensure that he loves God and God’s children.
 - 2. Note the interrelationship of love for the brethren and obedience to God’s commandments. It tells us that we must have love for the brethren to be assured we are also one of God’s children as they are. But, it also tells us how to show love for the brethren, namely, by keeping God’s commandments toward them.
 - B. Fellowship with God Assured by the Interrelationship of Love for God and Obedience to God. 5:3.
 - 1. The statement couldn’t be clearer. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” It does mean how we express love for God, and it does mean His law as summarized in the Ten Commandments.
 - 2. Note that putting this together with the preceding, it is a self-building cycle. We love God

by obeying Him. When we obey Him, according to His commandments, we will also love our fellow man, especially our brethren, by keeping His commandments, particularly nos. 5-10, toward them (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-15). When we love our brethren by keeping God's commandments toward them, we are also obeying God, and loving Him in the same act.

C. Fellowship with God Assured by the Interrelationship of Obedience and Faith.

1. Faith is the source of true obedience. Obedience is the evidence of faith.
2. It must be faith in the Triune God that particularly recognizes and rests upon Jesus Christ and the sacrifice of Himself unto death as witnessed by His shed blood and testified to by the Spirit and the symbolic waters of baptism, that it was effectual for the washing away of our sins.
3. It is faith that gives us the true witness in ourselves and in our confession of the right belief in the right Christ, as the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God, who gave Himself as a sacrifice for us.
4. It is this faith through which God has given us eternal life.

VII. Salvation unto Eternal Life Assured by the Combined Whole, that Assures Us of Fellowship with God.

- A. Assurance Brings Confidence in Prayer. We are assured that God hears and answers the prayers of His people.
- B. Assurance Brings Confidence of Aversion to Sin and Forgiveness of Sins.
- C. Assurance Brings Confidence of Safety from the Devil's Clutches.
- D. Assurance Brings Confidence in the Christian's Knowing God. To the point that John can carefully exhort us to avoid idols—avoid false gods and false conceptions of our God and Savior that the heretics of Gnosticism, who went out from us, were spreading.