

*[An article of Dr. Gordon H. Clark from The Witness, April, 1952, p. 13.]*

All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable: different parts are profitable differently; different books present us with different phases of God's truth. For example Paul's epistle to the Romans differs in several ways from the first epistle of John. Romans is long; I John is short. In Romans it is easy to see the general direction of the argument, but many of the verses are in themselves rather puzzling. On the other hand each verse in I John is relatively easy to understand, but it is very difficult to see the general direction of John's message. If a Bible student should examine five or six commentaries on Romans, he would find that they all have just about the same outline for the book. But if he should examine commentaries on I John, he would discover that there is little agreement on the outline. Without an outline one cannot follow the message intelligently. To understand a book it is necessary to be able to see the end from the beginning; and this means that an outline must be kept in mind. Perhaps the following outline of I John is just another one in addition to the others. There is the hope, however, that it may help some reader and lover of the Bible to obtain a little better understanding of what the beloved disciple has written for us.

## OUTLINE OF I JOHN

Prologue. 1:1-4. We witness to a true and not an illusory incarnation, that ye may have fellowship with the Father, with the Son, and with us, and that your joy may be full.

I. Fellowship with the Father-tested by righteousness, love, and belief. God is Light, (and what God is determines the conditions of fellowship). 1:5-2:28.

A. The condition of righteousness. 1:5-2:6.

a. Confession of sin. 1:5-2:2. Since God is Light, we must walk in the light, i.e., be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Since we are sinners, we must confess. If we do, God forgives us. If we do not, we call God a liar. Forgiveness comes through our advocate and propitiation, Jesus Christ.

b. Actual obedience. 2:3-6. We are assured of fellowship, if we keep his commandments.

B. The condition of love. 2:7-17.

a. Love to fellow Christians is light; hate is darkness. 7-11.

b. Parenthesis. 12-14. Reasons for writing to all ages.

c. Love of God excludes love of the world, which is temporary. He who obeys God abides forever. 15-17.

C. The condition of belief. 2:18-28.

a. Incorrect views of Jesus, without whom we cannot have the Father, destroy fellowship, as has been illustrated among you. 18-22.

b. Since Jesus is the only way to the Father, hold fast to original Christianity as taught by the Holy Ghost. This will prepare us for his coming. 23-28.

II. Sonship tested by righteousness, love and belief. 2:29-4:6.

A. Sonship tested by righteousness. 2:29-3:10.

a. Righteousness is a sign of sonship. 2:29.

b. Both the present and future wonders of sonship cause righteousness because sinning and abiding in him are incompatible. 3:1-7.

c. Sin is of the devil. Christ's purpose is to destroy the works of the devil. Therefore sonship and sin are incompatible, and hence righteousness is an obvious mark of sonship. 3:8-10.

B. Sonship tested by love. 3:10b-23. a. Love of Christians is also a mark, both to ourselves and to others, for hate is always caused by evil, and hence incompatible with eternal life. 3:10b-15.

b. Christ's sacrifice is our example of love. We should be willing to sacrifice life or wealth for Christians. 16-18.

c. Love should give us confidence before God. But if not, God is kinder than our consciences. Obedience brings answers to prayer. 19-23.

C. Sonship tested by belief. 3:23-4:6.

a. Belief in Christ is as much a commandment as love. 23-24.

b. The test of all spirits and false prophets, and the criterion of truth and error, is the confession that the eternal Logos was truly incarnate in Jesus Christ. 4:1-6.

III. Closer correlation of righteousness, love, and belief. 4:7-5:21.

A. Love and belief. 4:7-5:3.

a. Love is a condition of fellowship because such is God's nature. God's love is expressed in Christ, and puts us under obligation to love one another. 7-12.

b. This same love obligates us also to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. 13-16.

c. Hate and fear do not exist where love is. Belief makes one a son, and if we love God we must love his children. 4:17-5:3.

B. Righteousness and belief. 5:3b-21.

a. He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world. 3b-5.

b. This requires a real, not an illusory, incarnation. Eternal life is possible only through Jesus Christ. 6-13.

c. This belief gives us confidence in prayer; we should pray that sinning Christians be forgiven; but the truly regenerate person does not habitually commit sin. 14-20.

Conclusion: Jesus Christ is the true God and Eternal Life; do not worship idols.